June 23 & 30, 1997

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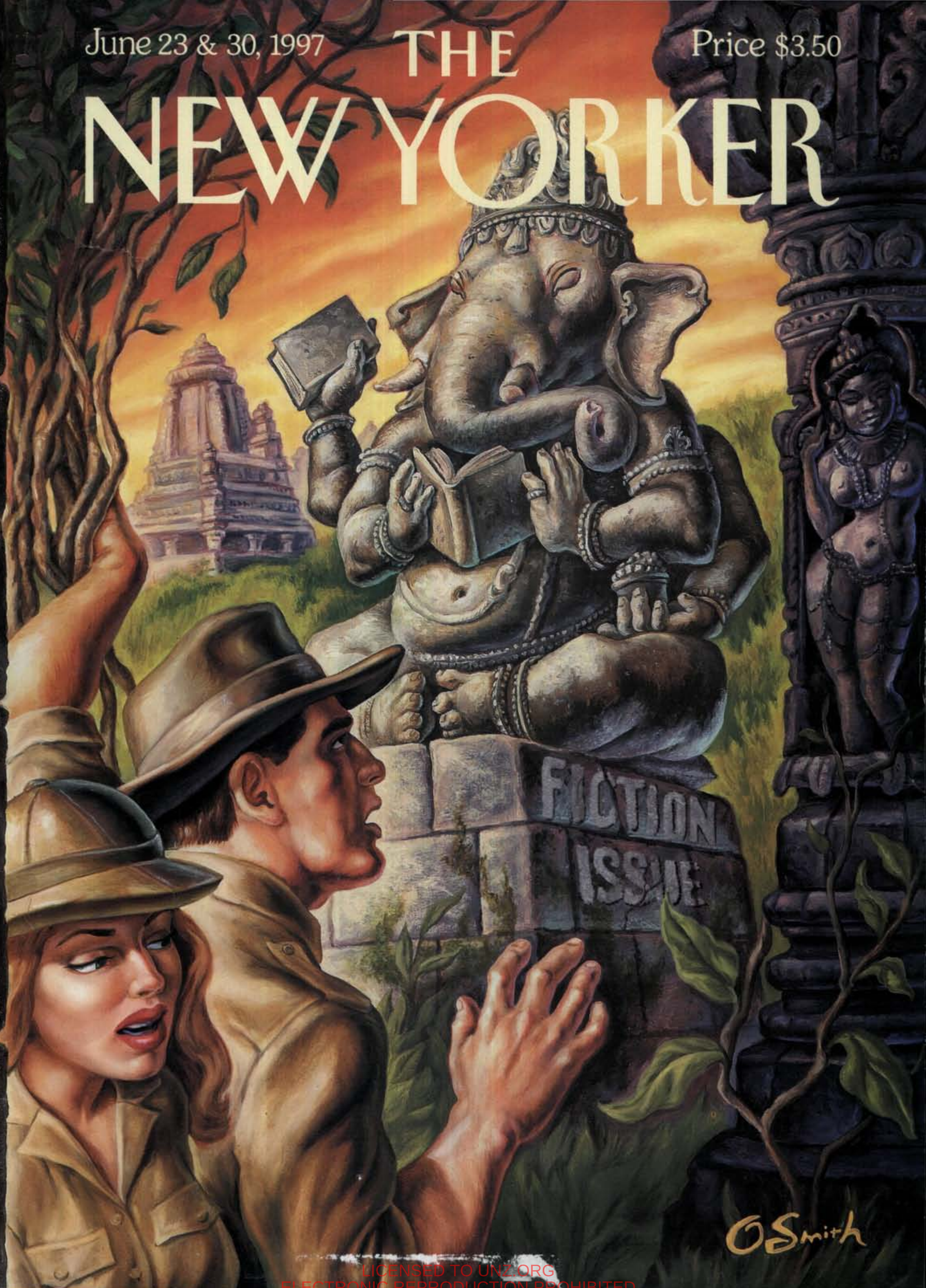
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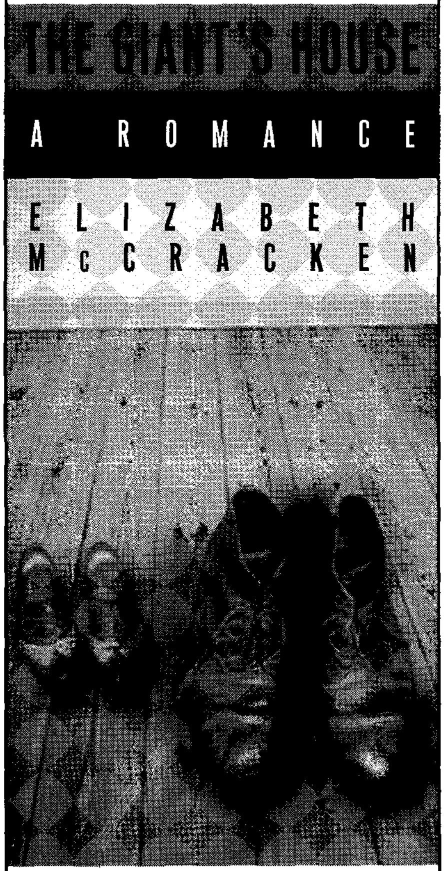

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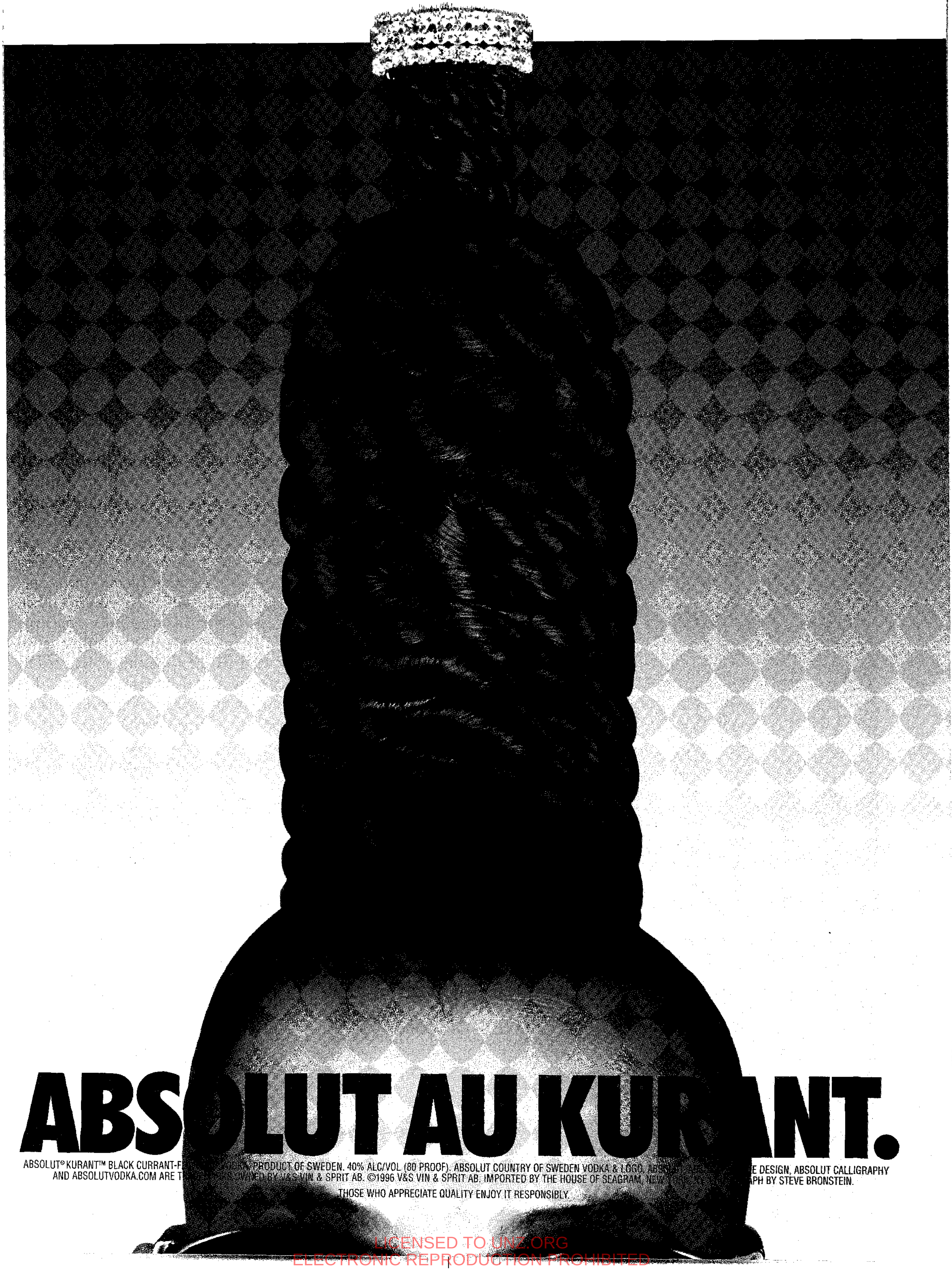

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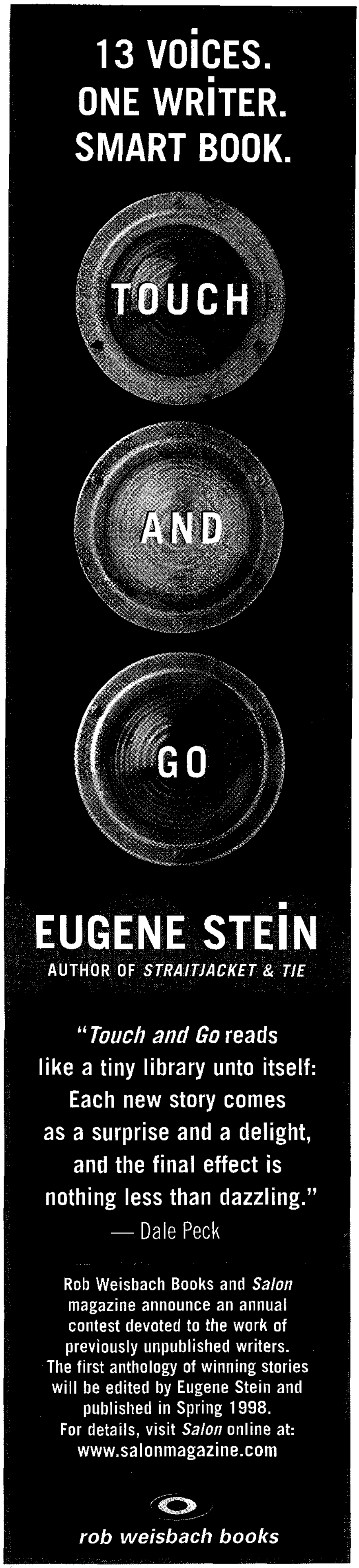

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COMMENT

DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

Why are there suddenly so many Indian novelists?

JUST over halfway through this issue, you're going to find a photograph of eleven people—men and women, all dressed informally, and all conveying an impression of what might be described as uneasy intimacy. The intimacy has been effected by a photographer desperate to herd an edgy group into his frame. You can infer his instructions: "Please, everybody, just get a little closer. That's it. Closer still. Good. Now put your hand on the shoulder of the person next to you. Or your arm—*excellent!* No, really, I don't know him, either, but I can promise he's not going to bite—or, if he does, you'll love it, darling. Good. Now, please, everyone—look frothy!"

The results are illuminating. In the pile of pictures from which this particular one was picked, there are variations on a theme of muted panic. In one picture, somebody seems to be pulling away at the last second; in others, people appear to be stiffening in response to that intrusive hand on the shoulder, or to that arm, or to the body of someone who is suddenly pressing just a bit too close. There are looks of self-consciousness, of curiosity, of giddiness. For the strange thing is this: most of these people have never met before.

These people are India's leading novelists, and the fact that this was the first time that many of them had been in one place reveals something about what it means to be an author from the subcontinent. They had, of course, encountered each other in print, not always without friction: there was a muttered exchange under the studio lights involving a sour review one of them had given another's novel in a London literary magazine. And they had all read *about* each other, in newspapers and magazines—the hype of the Indian novel, one author called it. And yet the same author, infected by an excitement that finally touched everyone, ventured the thought that maybe the hype is true after all. Maybe there *is* such a thing as an Indian literature.

But what does it mean to be an Indian novelist today? (Or a Sri Lankan novelist, or one from Pakistan, or one from Britain but with Indian parents—or with an Indian mother and a Pakistani father?) It's difficult enough answering the question, What does it mean to be Indian—to be a citizen of a country that for thousands of years was

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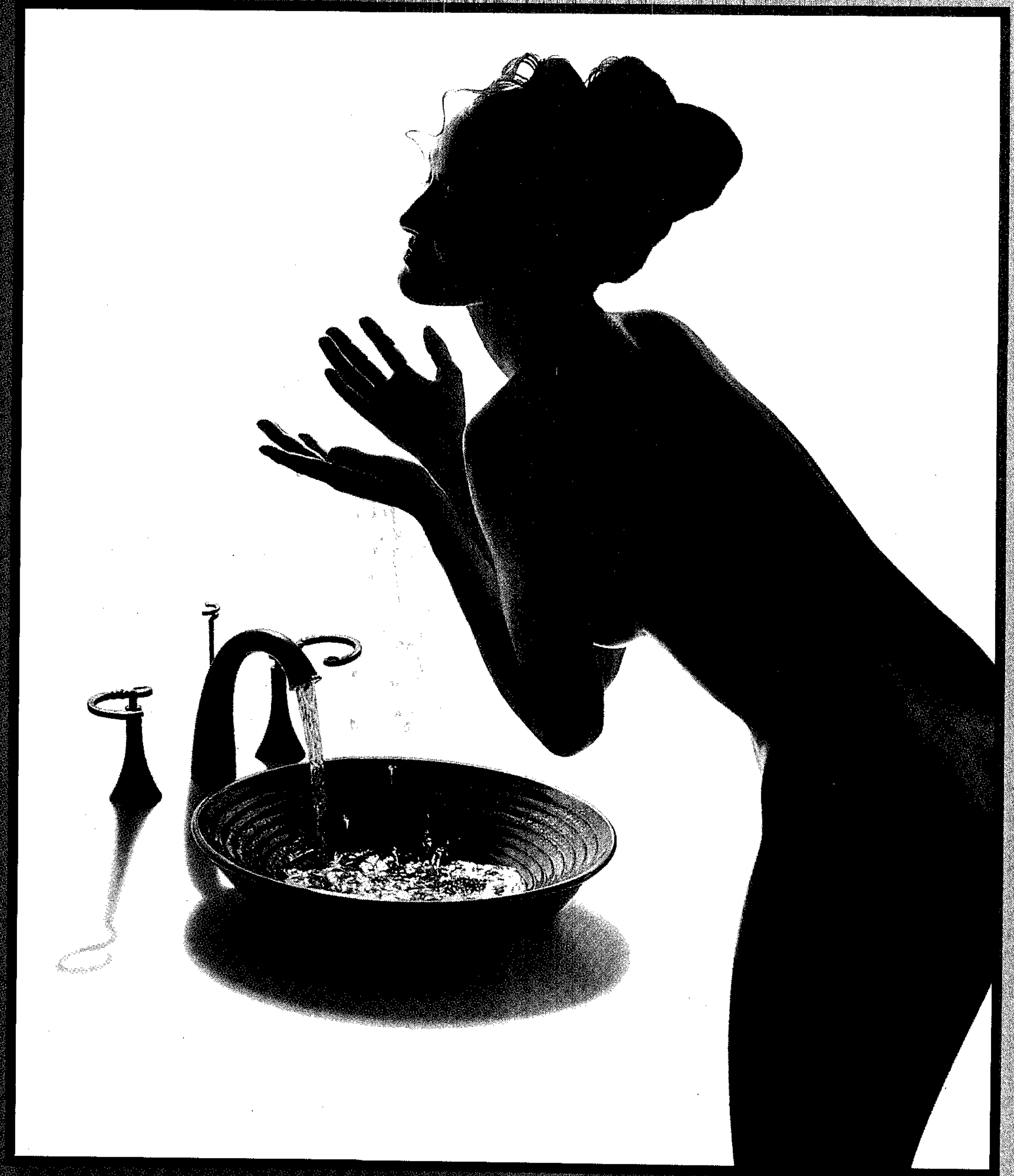

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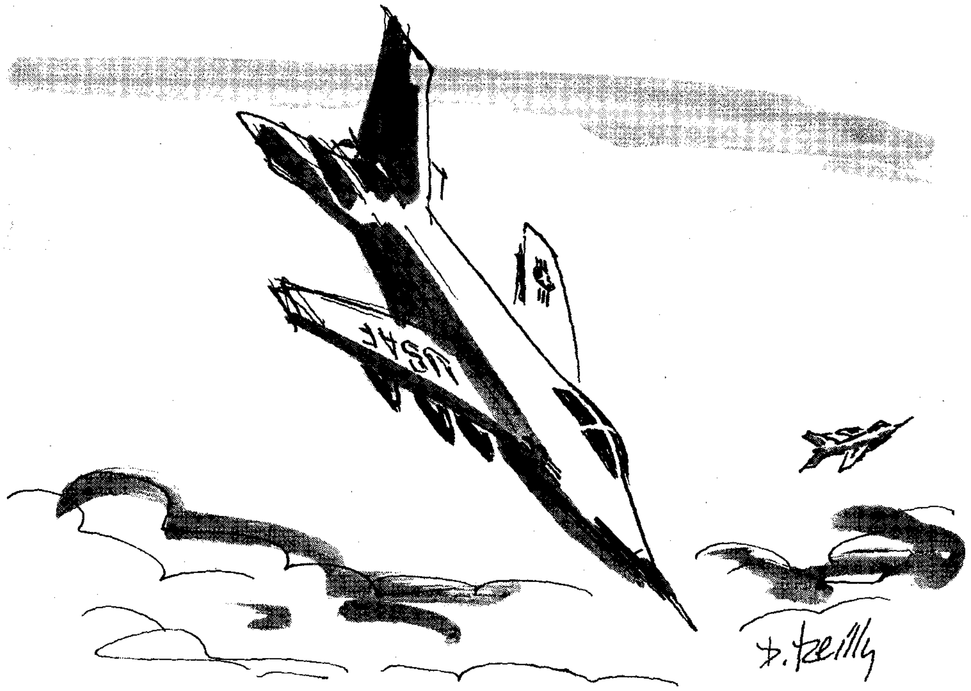

"Same here. Dropping bombs is all the sex I need."

• •

no country, that has not one language but at least eighteen, and that has no single race or religion or culture but many races, many religions, many cultures. And to be an Indian novelist is to be something that has been changing, utterly, especially since 1981. That was the year that Salman Rushdie published "Midnight's Children," a book that, as even most of the authors in the photograph would grudgingly acknowledge, made everything possible. "Midnight's Children" showed Indian writers that great novels could be fashioned from Indian stories, with an Indian sensibility and a distinctly Indian use of the English language. Almost as important, it showed publishers in the West that books by an Indian writer could sell. (In understanding what motivates the makers of literature, as Dr. Johnson knew, it pays to think about pay.) A decade's changes are in the photograph: of our eleven authors, only three had published a novel ten years ago. Six of them have published novels in the last year alone. (A seventh, Kiran Desai, whose first published work appears in this issue, has also just finished a novel.) Something is happening.

In what sense is that something Indian? Again, the photograph. It was taken in London on the morning of May 30th. Two weeks earlier, the plan had been to have it taken in New York. In truth, the photograph could have been taken just about anywhere, with more or less the same fortuitous mixture of Indian writers on hand—anywhere, that is, except India. On the occasion of this particular shoot, Arundhati Roy had arrived the night before from Amsterdam. Vikram Seth had arrived a few hours before that from Vienna. Others came from Toronto, Boston, New York, and Cambridge. Only one—Vikram Chandra—journeyed from India, and that was because he had been visiting his family; he lives in Washington, D.C.

In almost every literary movement, the writers know each other. They meet. They drink. They compare manuscripts. They share publishers. They behave badly. The Romantics, the Surrealists, the Modernists, the Beats: if any of these had been gathered for a group photograph, the odds are that they wouldn't have had to go halfway around the world to get to the studio. What's happening among Indian writers must be unprecedented: they work, some of them in an adopted language, and often in isolation, even thousands of miles from their homeland.

What can you say about Indian fiction? Too much and too little. You can point to both its extravagances and its spareness. It can be fabulist, realistic, chatty, mad, or wildly eccentric. There are qualities in its language that you won't find elsewhere: sometimes its use is more exacting—more precise, more clearly articulated—than the language might be in the hands of a British or American author, almost as if the language were slightly anachronistic, of a different and more disciplined world. At other times, the language seems to be intentionally cliché-driven (full of phrases that are grist to the mill, if not actually stemming the tide, while champing at the bit—pull your socks up, you want to say). There is a physicalness to the language, like the physicalness of paint on canvas: the reader is always aware of it as a medium, a thing that the writer is having to work and fashion the world from. But the truth is that no one generalization seems to characterize the fiction being written by Indian writers—in the way that a generalization might describe a school or a trend. The truth is that what we are witnessing is not a school or a trend but something bigger in scope.

It is worth recalling that the United States, like India, was a colony of the British Empire, and that an American language and an American literature are, historically, relatively recent: they came into being after Independence. In America, English was something that had to be appropriated from the British and made new again. It is possible that we're witnessing a similar thing now, among Indian writers, fifty years after India's Independence: that, in a land of eighteen languages and a seemingly infinite range of cultures, a new kind of English is finding a voice, a distinctly Indian English, one that is at once local and international, of its culture and of the globe.

Midnight on August 14th will mark the fiftieth anniversary of Indian Independence. It will be an occasion for celebration and scrutiny. Many of the issues of 1947 remain unresolved today: Partition, Hindu nationalism, religious communalism, poverty. And something else is unresolved, too, but in a hopeful, even exhilarating, way: the shape of a future Indian literature. —BILL BUFORD

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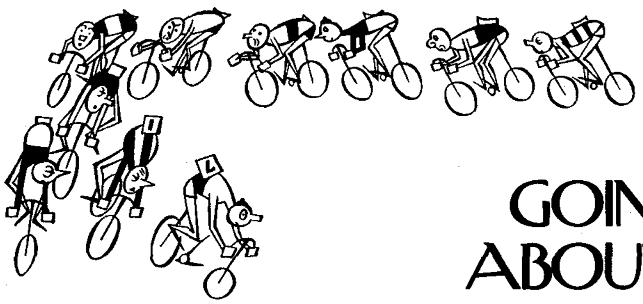

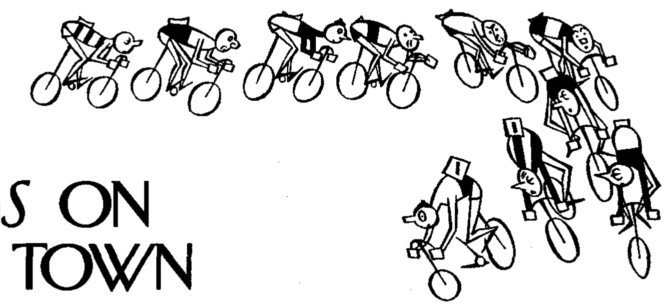

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

African-American Performance Art Festival—A four-day showcase of new and experimental collaborative works, by choreographer Bill T. Jones and author Bell Hooks; performance artists Dael Orlandersmith and Rebecca Rice; and playwright Sekou Sundiata, composer Craig Harris, and Senegalese drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose, among others. June 19-22 at 7:30. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. For more information, call 650-7148.)

Always . . . Patsy Cline—A two-person musical about the country-and-Western singer. In previews through June 23. Opens June 24 at 7. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

As Bees in Honey Drown—Mark Brokaw directs a comedy by Douglas Carter Beane, about a Manhattan socialite who hires a novelist to write a movie treatment based on her fabulous life story. A Drama Dept. production. Preview on June 18. Opens June 19 at 8 and runs through June 29. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 629-4656.)

Birdseed Bundles—Valda Setterfield and Lola Pashalinski star in a workshop production of Ain Gordon's family-history tragicomedy. June 18-22 at 7:30. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

Forever Tango—An evening of Argentine music and dance, created and directed by Luis Bravo. Two previews on June 18. Opens June 19 at 6:30. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Henry VIII—Ruben Santiago-Hudson portrays the King in the final production of the New York Shakespeare Festival's nine-year marathon. Mary Zimmerman is the director. In previews through June 25. Opens June 26 at 8 and continues through July 9. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

Queens Blvd.—A roommate comedy by Paul Corrigan. In previews through June 22. Opens June 23 at 6:45. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

Sexy Dirty Bloody Scary—There you have it. A production of San Francisco's Splanchnic Theatricals, written by and starring Chris Brophy. Opens June 18 at 8 and runs through July 13. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Something Blue—A wedding comedy, written and performed by Michaela Murphy. In previews through June 21. Opens June 22 at 7. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Tartuffe—Molière's comedy, directed by Terrence O'Brien, is the first of two outdoor productions by the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. Previews June 25-27. Opens June 28 at 8 and runs through July 20. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)

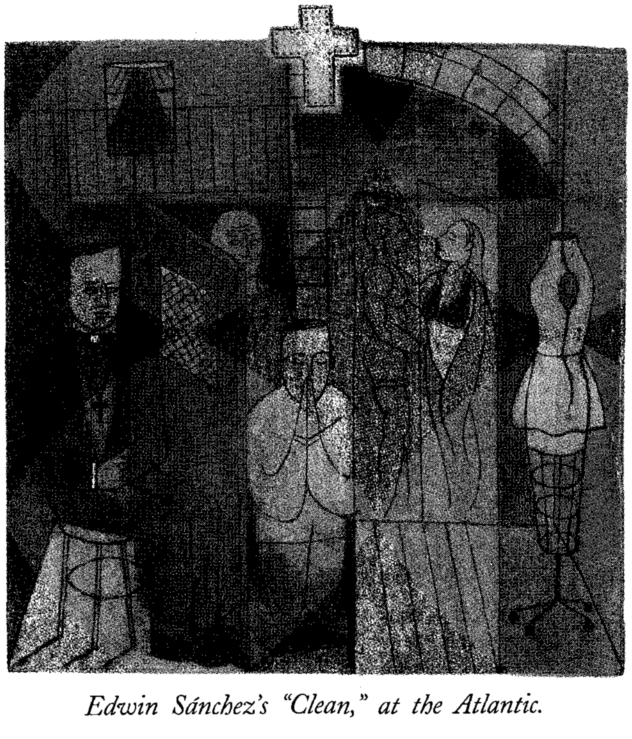
You Don't Miss the Water—The poet Cornelius Eady and the composer Diedre L. Murray's musical about a young black poet coping with his troublesome family. Opens June 18 at 8 and runs through June 29. (Vineyard's 26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 353-3874.)

OPENED RECENTLY

All My Sons—A strong production of Arthur Miller's wrenching 1947 drama, about the cost of maintaining the sacred illusions of American life. Both John Cullum and Linda Stephens, as the heads of a Midwestern family, are good as "normal" people who appear to have nothing to hide; Michael Hayden is convincing as their tormented son; and Angie Phillips gives a solid and disciplined performance as his girlfriend. Barry Edelstein directed. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/2/97.) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes June 29.)

An American Daughter—A doctor undergoing confirmation hearings for the post of Surgeon General gets run through the wringer by the media, in Wendy Wasserstein's latest, a moving, compelling drama that resonates well beyond the feminist arena. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. Directed by Martin Charnin. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



Edwin Sánchez's "Clean," at the Atlantic.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Baby Anger—In Peter Hedges' new comedy, Kristen Johnston and John Pankow portray a couple whose crummy childhoods have made them anti-procreation, until a diaphragm fails them; once their child arrives, they try to use his telegenic looks to buy themselves happier lives, without regard to how it all affects him. Hedges (author of "What's Eating Gilbert Grape?") seems to have written a those-who-cannot-remember-the-past-are-condemned-to-repeat-it cautionary tale, but in spite of an excellent production, fine acting, and Michael Mayer's crisp yet sensitive direction, it doesn't quite work. The quick-vignette script, although smart and funny, is disjointed and fuzzy, and by the time you get around to wondering where the show is going it's over. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 22.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, unmiked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. Well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bermuda Avenue Triangle—In this silly farce, a sexy gambler on the skids (Joseph Bologna) returns the zing to the lives of two elderly women, a Jew (Renée Taylor) and a Catholic (Nanette Fabray), whose sullen daughters have put them out to pasture in a Las Vegas retirement home. Bologna and Taylor's script traffics in the kind of cookie-cutter stereotypes that rate high on the matinée-crowd yuk-o-meter. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

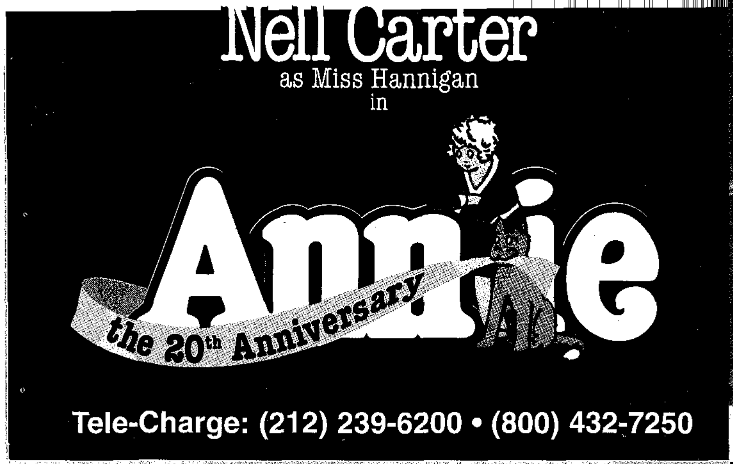
Candide—Spectacle substitutes for satire in this revival and revision of the 1956 Leonard Bernstein–Lillian Hellman–Richard Wilbur musical, directed by Hal Prince. Ultimately, the production drowns out all personality, with the exceptions of the expert Andrea Martin, who knows a laugh and how to get it, and Arte Johnson, a little comic who is large on charm. (5/19/97) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Capitol Steps—A political revue performed by a troupe of former congressional staff members. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes June 29.)

Chicas 2000—In her latest camp comedy, about love in the age of genetic remodelling, Carmelita Tropicana finds herself in the slammer for murdering a man who illegally cloned her buttocks cells. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088. Closes June 21.)

Clean—Edwin Sánchez's latest drama about love in a world of violence. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes July 6.)

Collected Stories—Donald Margulies takes on the subject of literary betrayal in his new play, which stars Maria Tucci as a distinguished short-story writer and Debra Messing as a graduate student who absorbs her professor's lessons all too well. The pair are well directed by Lisa Peterson, and Tucci, whose character is a cross between Professor Kingsfield and Margo Channing, is especially good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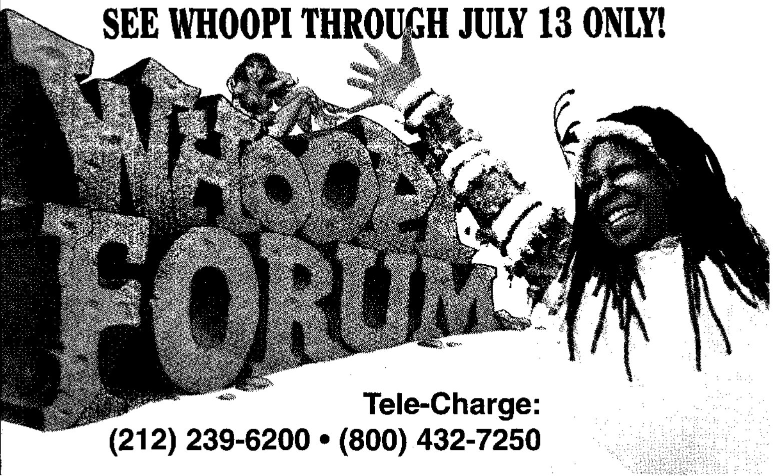
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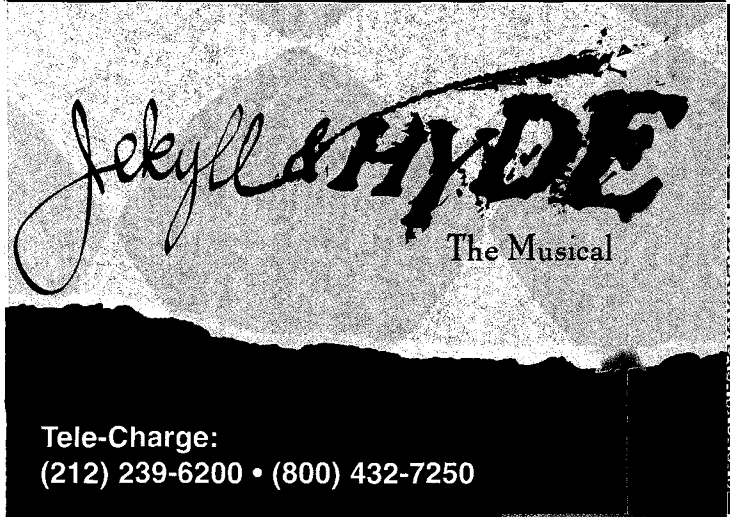
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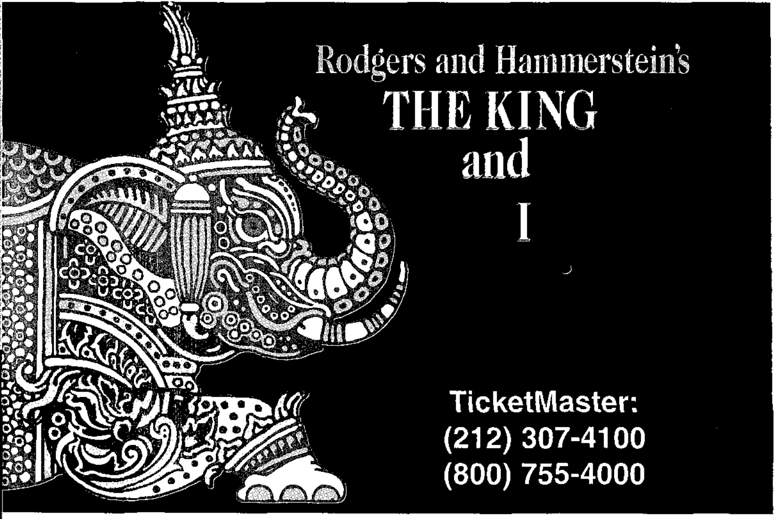
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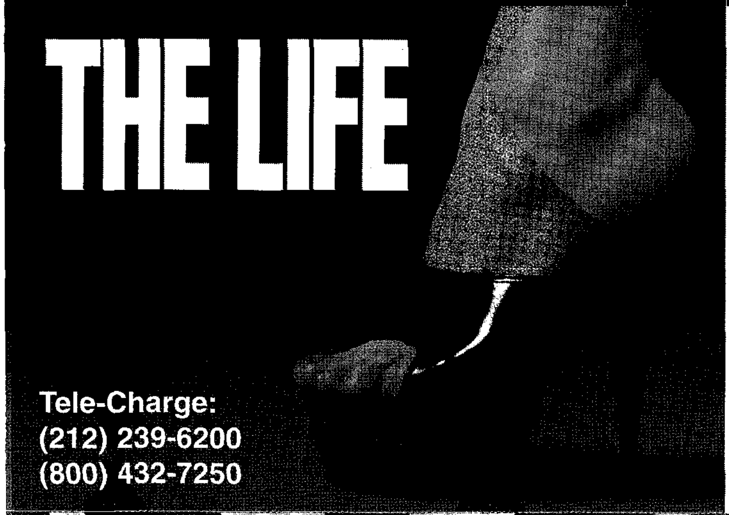

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Counting the Ways and **Springtime**—A pair of one-acts, written by Edward Albee and Maria Irene Fornes and presented by the Other Theatre. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 332-0636. Closes June 22.)

A Doll's House—A thrilling version of Ibsen's play, imported from the West End. Anthony Page's scrupulous, sensitive direction catches all the music and irony in the collusion between Nora (in a masterly turn by Janet McTeer) and her husband, Torvald (the passionate Owen Teale). (4/14/97) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—A train wreck of a tribute to the great lyricist Johnny Mercer, in which only the singer Margaret Whiting and the singing jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli get out alive. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Fairy Tales—A revue about gay life, by Eric Lane Barnes. Directed by Mark Cannistraro. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

A Flower of Water—A prostitute living in Edo-period Tokyo resigns herself to suicide, only to be reincarnated as a prostitute in the present, in a drama by Yuko Hamada and Yukihiro Saji. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 262-0234. Closes June 29.)

The Gin Game—Julie Harris and Charles Durning shine in the National Actors Theatre's funny, poignant revival of D. L. Coburn's 1977 play, about two elderly people who discover an antidote to their loneliness in a card game. Charles Nelson Reilly directed. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde—Writer-director Moisés Kaufman treads the well-worn ground of Wilde's martyrdom to Victorian intolerance in an intriguing and ultimately moving new way: he renders the playwright's trials from edited transcripts, interposing letters from some of the principals, passages from Wilde's published writings, and assorted bits and pieces of other people's memoirs and commentaries. The result, thanks to Kaufman's clever (if occasionally self-indulgent) direction and a strong, versatile cast, is surprisingly theatrical. This story is so resonant as a modern morality play that sometimes it can seem as though there's nothing personal left in it; with the aid of Michael Emerson's paradoxically powerful portrayal of Wilde's increasing fragility, this production makes it once again the story of one man's tragedy. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

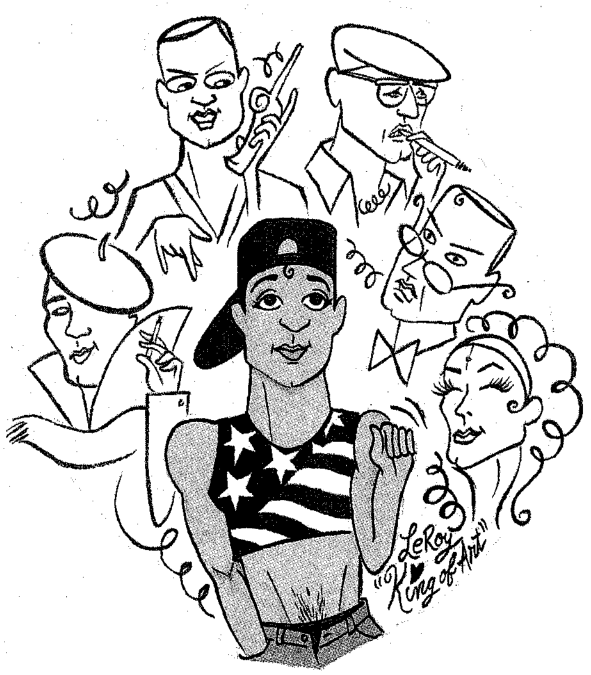
Jekyll & Hyde—Enjoyable bombast, loosely based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel. With music by Frank Wildhorn, lyrics and a book by Leslie Bricusse, and solid direction by Robin Phillips. (5/12/97) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Jest a Second!—James Sherman's new sequel to his 1991 Jewish-family comedy, "Beau Jest," in a Jewish Repertory Theatre production. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In this romantic comedy of manners, set in Atlanta in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Last Session—A musical about an AIDS-afflicted songwriter's final studio work, with a book by Jim Brochu and music and lyrics by Steve Schalchlin. (Currican, 154 W. 29th St. 736-2533. Closes June 29.)

The Life—This new musical about the oldest profession in Times Square before it became known as the new Times Square and the men who profit from its practitioners is a cynical, poisonous concoction, featuring phony funk, fake blues, overcooked pop, and a cartoonish, insulting book. The game cast includes some good singers, notably Lillias White and Pamela Isaacs. (5/12/97) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)



Felix A. Pire, in "Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown," by Guillermo Reyes.

LEROY "KING OF ART"

London Assurance—As a vain, preening dandy, Brian Bedford serves up so much ham in this production of Dion L. Boucicault's 1841 mistaken-identity farce that you're ready to push the plate away and leave the table long before the meal has ended. The play has been ballyhooed as foreshadowing Wilde, but it's at least twice as annoying as it is witty. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes June 29.)

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown—Felix A. Pire, who has such fine stage presence that he makes even the costume and set changes interesting, brings a wacky improvisational spirit to his portrayal of six gay Latino immigrants, in a one-man show penned by Guillermo Reyes. Some of the characters seem to be hanging on to their American existence by a thread, but, make no mistake, *gringito,* these are tough, tenacious men: as Federico, a lovable recent arrival from Central America, says, "I'm here to stay. Get used to it." Joseph Megel directed. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Mere Mortals and Others—Six short plays by David Ives, who created the wonderful "All in the Timing." Only two are new, but they are Ives at his clever best. "Time Flies" is about the short life of two mayflies—only one day to grow up and get it on before going to the great beyond—and the two actors who play them, Anne O'Sullivan and Arnie Burton, are perfectly buggy. "Dr. Fritz; or, The Forces of Light" is a piece of insanity set somewhere south of the border, and Nancy Opel, woman of a hundred lunatic accents, gives an inspired performance as a *loca* local and as a mad German doctor. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

My Night with Reg—The New Group wraps up its season with British playwright Kevin Elyot's 1995 comedy about a group of six gay friends. Maxwell Caulfield is in the cast; Jack Hofsiss is the director. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 29.)

Notions in Motion—Jeremy Dobrish's very loose adaptation of Pirandello's "Each in His Own Way" isn't entirely successful on any terms, even though Mr. Dobrish's work and the Adobe Theatre Company's production both show a lot of promise. The play consists of some very funny sketches stitched together by long stretches of overblown blather, nearly redeemed by a surprise ending that effectively (if a little cutely) subverts the entire notion of theatre and theatrical truth. The cast is for the most part terrific—particularly Kathryn Langwell, as a grandmother, and Stacey Leigh Ivey, as a very stupid Mafia moll. Wittily directed by Mr. Dobrish. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 560-7387. Closes June 28.)

Seeking the Genesis—A drama by Kia Corthron, about a single mother trying to rear two sons in an inner-city housing project. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 6.)

Steel Pier—John Kander and Fred Ebb's new musical takes place at a dance marathon in Atlantic City in 1933: it's a slick Depression fantasy with imagery and ideas that have long been overused in movies and television. (5/12/97) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Tell-Tale—Theatre Couture puts a drag spin on Edgar Allan Poe, in a comic thriller starring Sherry Vine and Jackie Beat and featuring puppetry by Basil Twist. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Titanic—Though this musical about history's most tragic maiden voyage contains no small number of historical and theatrical misjudgments, it nevertheless manages to take you very close to the heart of the matter—the enormity of the disaster and its heartbreaking human details—and it qualifies as a genuine addition to American musical theatre. Richard Jones directed. (5/12/97) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. (Moves on June 26 to the Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.) . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JOSEPH GABRIEL: MAGIC ON BROADWAY:** Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

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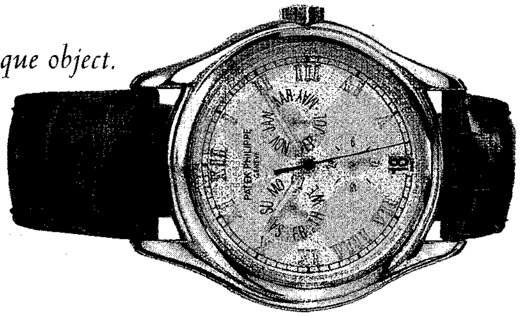

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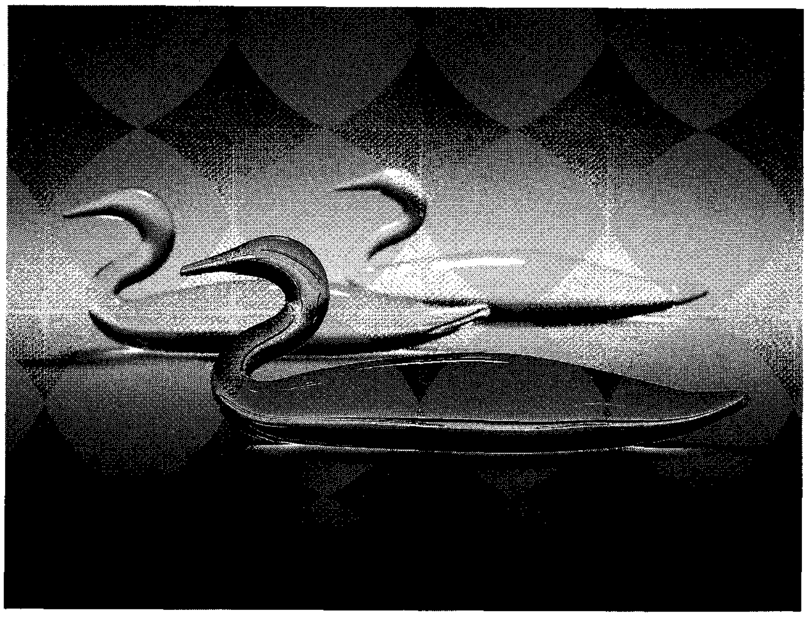

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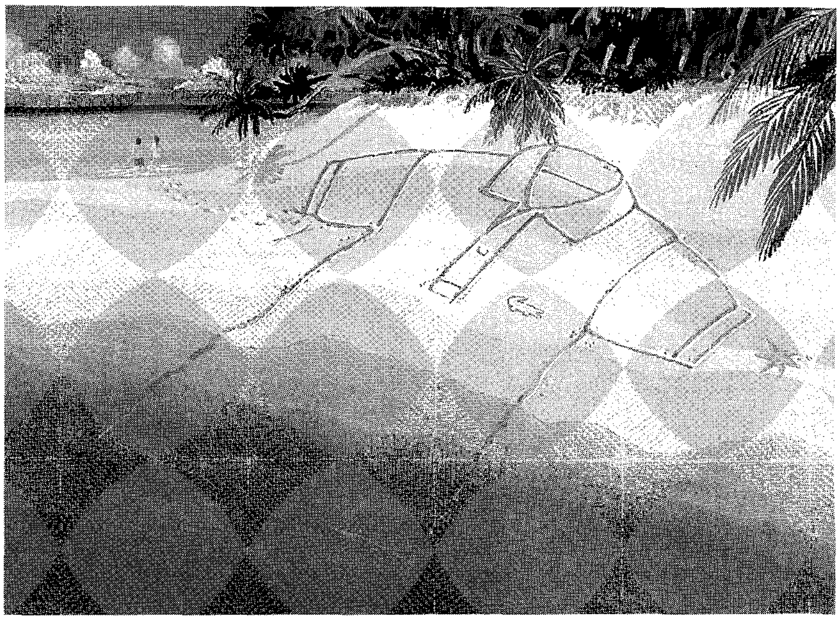

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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Final performances of the season. June 18 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Pavane," "Kammermusik No. 2," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." . . . ¶ June 19 at 8: "Concerto in Five Movements," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." . . . ¶ June 20 at 8: "I'm Old Fashioned," "Brandenburg," and "The Concert." . . . ¶ June 21 at 2: "Interplay," "Tarantella," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 21 at 8: "Circle of Fifths," "Urban Dances," and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 22 at 3: "Concerto in Five Movements," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Schoenberg/Wuorinen Variations," and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ June 24-27, June 28 at 2 and 8, and June 29 at 3: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE—June 18 and June 21 at 2 and 8, and June 19-20 and June 23 at 8: "The Sleeping Beauty." . . . ¶ June 24 and June 26 at 8, and June 25 at 2 and 8: "Othello." . . . ¶ June 27 and June 30-July 1 at 8, and June 28 at 2 and 8: "Romeo and Juliet." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 5.)

DONALD BYRD/THE GROUP—The ten-member company presents "Quartet" and "Sentimental Cannibalism," both set to scores by Mio Morales, and the première of "Still," to Louis Andriessen. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 17 at 7:30, June 18-21 at 8, and June 22 at 2 and 7:30.)

PILOBOLUS—The athletic Vermont troupe opens its monthlong season of new works and such repertory offerings as "Pyramid of the Moon" and "Walklyndon." (Joyce Theatre. 242-0800. June 24-27 and July 1 at 8, and June 28 at 2 and 8. Through July 20.)

"KI-ACHÉ: STORIES FROM MY BELLY"—The dancer-choreographer Peggy Myo-Young Choy, in collaboration with dancer Dyane Harvey and composer Fred Wei-Han Ho, interweaves the stories of four women: a Korean entertainer, an African monarch, a Black Panther, and a Korean labor organizer. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 19-22 at 8:30.)

"GLOBAL EXCHANGE"—The "Exchange" part is a collaboration by four choreographers—Americans Bebe Miller and Susan Braham and Australians Shelly Lasica and Sandra Parker—and accordionist-composer Guy Klucevsek. Miller and Braham were two of the most eye-catching performers in the postmodern dance world of the early eighties. Their method for their as yet untitled piece includes what Braham describes as "alternating moves": "Bebe makes one and I make one and we both put them together. It's this fascinating experience, being her for a split second. And that will just be multiplied when the Australians join us." The program also includes Miller's company performing her lambent, gospel-music-inspired "Blessed" and her work in progress on racial and class themes, "Going to the Wall." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie. 674-8194. June 26-29 at 8:30.)

CORTEZ & CO.—Hernando Cortez, the former Paul Taylor dancer and founder of Dancers Responding to AIDS, and his fifteen-member company present six new works, including "Sunstroked," "Hard Drive," and "Unquiet Mind." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. June 19-22 at 8.)

"FEAST"—A spicy ragout, cooked up by director and choreographer Clarinda Mac Low, blending dance and performance art—by Koosil-Ja Hwang, Christalyn Wright, Patricia Hofbauer, George Emilio Sanchez, and Paz Tanjuaquio, among others—into an homage to one ritual: the meal. During the festivities, the theatre will be transformed from a warren of performance sites into a place for a (literal) communal feast. Reservations are required, since the performers need to know how many to feed. (Charas/El Bohio, at Teatro La Terraza, 360 E. 10th St. 841-1680. June 18-22 at 7:15.)

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

A happy confluence of free concerts and jazz festivals, plus the usual abundance of club gigs, makes the next two weeks some of the busiest in years. For more information about the JVC Jazz Festival, call 501-1390; about the Knitting Factory's Texaco New York Jazz Festival, call 219-3006; about Central Park SummerStage, call 360-2777; about Celebrate Brooklyn, call 718-855-7882, ext. 52.

John Zorn's Masada—This free show may be the coup of the Texaco New York Jazz Festival. The ornery ethnic-Ornette collision that Zorn's renegade band represents should sound even more provocative with the shores of Staten Island as a backdrop. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. June 19 at 6:30.)

The Heath Brothers—Blood ties may account in part for the brothers' uncommon cohesion as a unit, but saxophonist Jimmy, bassist Percy, and drummer Albert all have lustre enough to fill in any gaps. (New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St., between Church St. and West Broadway. 966-0300. June 19 at 7:30.)

Ohio Players / Reverend Daddy Love—Take a ride on the love roller coaster. / Former Living Colour wild front man Corey Glover with his new funk-and-soul revue. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Brooklyn. June 20 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

G3: Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, and **Kenny Wayne Shepherd**—A holy day for all the kids who ever made rude noises in music stores. The "G" stands for guitar, the "3" for this comic-book triumvirate of guitar heroes. The boys' special guest is the true elder statesman and guitar guru **Robert Fripp.** (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. June 20 at 7:30.)

"Aretha Franklin's Gospel Crusade for AIDS"—If the current crop of R. & B. divas spent a little time with a copy of "Aretha's Gold" (1969), they might better appreciate the concept of using one's voice in the service of a song rather than the other way around. Gospel remains the straw that stirs Lady Soul's drink. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. June 20 and June 22 at 8.)

"Music in the Anchorage"—The annual experimental-music festival continues. June 20: The Scottish feedback band **Mogwai** and the local drone-and-sample duo **Bowery Electric.** June 21: "Mutantrumpet" player and manipulator **Ben Neill** with **DJ Spooky;** projectaholic **Jim O'Rourke;** and composer **David Shea.** June 27: The artist known as **Scanner** grabs live cell-phone conversations out of the air and throws them into his sonic mix. Also on the bill are **Main, Tweaker,** and **Sticker.** June 28: **Liquid Sky Music** presents d.j.s **Spooky, Soul Slinger, Del Mar, Odi and Ani, Dmitri** (of Deee-Lite), **Khan,** and **Wally.** (Cadman Plaza West at Front St., Brooklyn. For information, call 212-206-6674, ext. 252. Doors open at 9.)

Medeski, Martin, and Wood / Hermeto Pascoal—The jazz-funk organ-bass-and-drum team and the avant-jazz multi-instrumentalist. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. June 21 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

The Allman Brothers Band—The grizzled midnight riders, still soldiering on. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 21 at 7:30.)

Caetano Veloso—A knockout songwriter and a perfect charmer who wraps an audience in velvet lyricism and doesn't let it go until mellow Brazilian vibes have permeated the room. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 21 at 8.)

"A Stardust Serenade: The Music of Hoagy Carmichael"—Choice members of the neo-swing A-list (including Scott Hamilton, Kenny Davern, Howard Alden, Randy Sandke, and Michael Moore) turn out to salute the composer of "Stardust," "Georgia on My Mind," and maybe a dozen more of this century's best American popular songs. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 21 at 8.)

Dr. John—A free concert by the New Orleans pianist whose gruff-throated, back-porch take on R. & B. has been much imitated but never matched. (World Financial Center Plaza, West St. at Liberty St. June 23 at 7.)

No Doubt / Weezer—The insipid neo-ska chart monsters are joined by the infinitely more gifted group whose 1995 hit, "Buddy Holly," suggested a marriage of the Beach Boys (after Brian Wilson's breakdown) and indie austerity. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 23 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Weezer also plays Roseland on June 25 at 7:30. 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171.)

Lena Horne—She's got talent, chutzpah, beauty, and longevity; do we need any more reasons to celebrate her? This eightieth-birthday bash will be a grand old all-star event. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 23 at 8.)

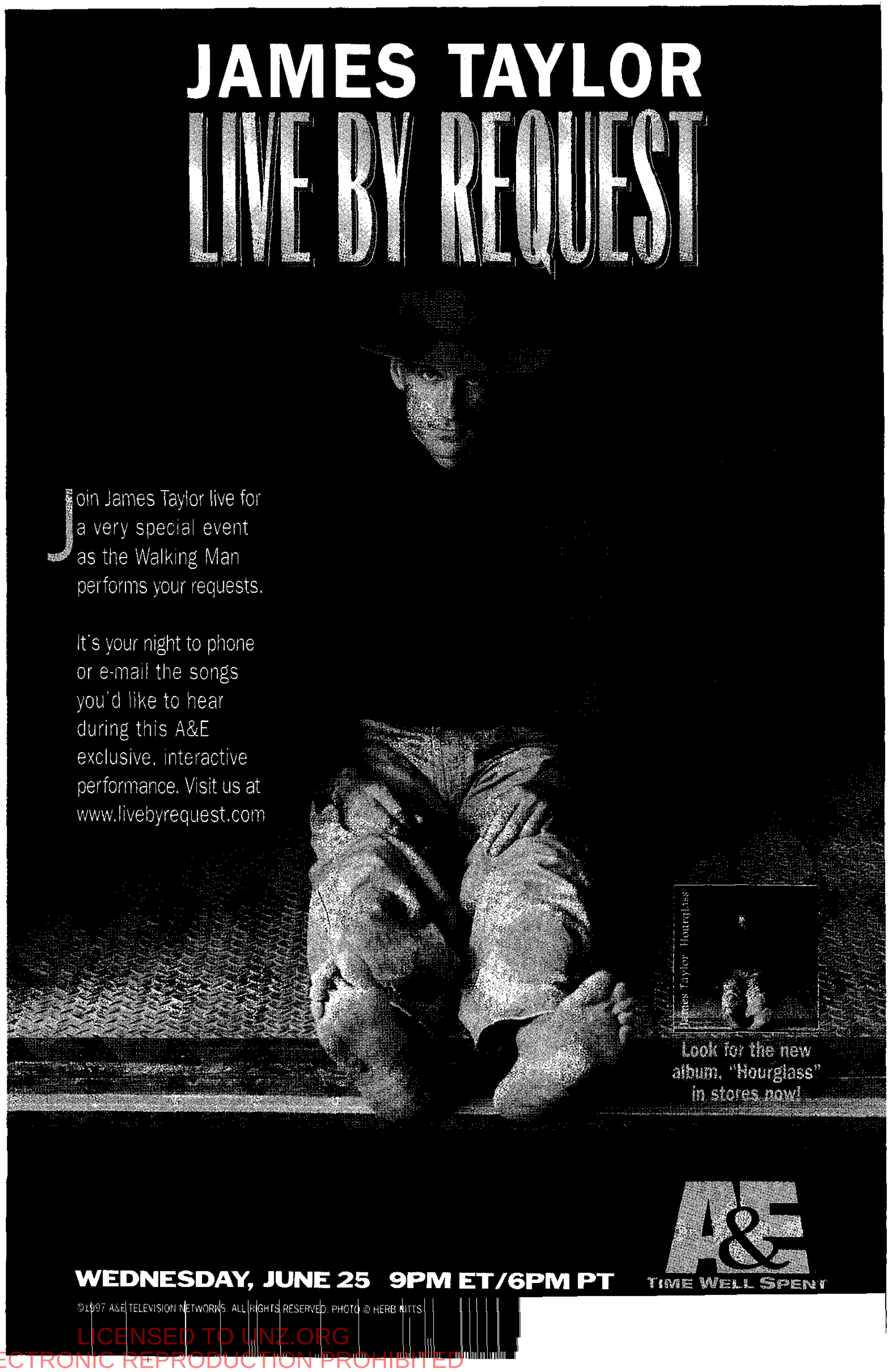
"R.O.A.R. Tour"—Iggy Pop tops an eclectic bill that also features Sponge, the Reverend Horton Heat, the Nixons, Bloodhound Gang, and the Eric Hamilton Band. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. June 24; doors open at 5.)

Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra—Will Haden's feistily political ensemble still perform the anthem of the African National Congress now that apartheid has been laid to rest? There's only one way to find out. (New York Academy of Art. June 24 at 7:30.)

Herbie Hancock and Friends—Hancock is importing plenty of guest stars to ladle on the dazzle, including Mike Brecker, John Scofield, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette. Super-bassist Christian McBride and his quartet open. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 24 at 8.)

"Blue Note Sings and Swings"—Blue Note Records has the right to strut: they've got the premier contemporary vocalist in Cassandra Wilson, the most gifted saxophonist of the past two decades in Joe Lovano, and in Geri Allen a superbly fluent pianist who's in it for the long haul. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 24 at 8.)

Ben Folds Five / Morphine / Pharoah Sanders—A smart, piano-based trio from Chapel Hill, led by Folds, who plays a wondrously jaunty baby grand and sings like a cross between Joe Jackson and Freddie Mercury. / Morphine continues to make nifty guitar pop without a guitarist, mining a miraculously rich vein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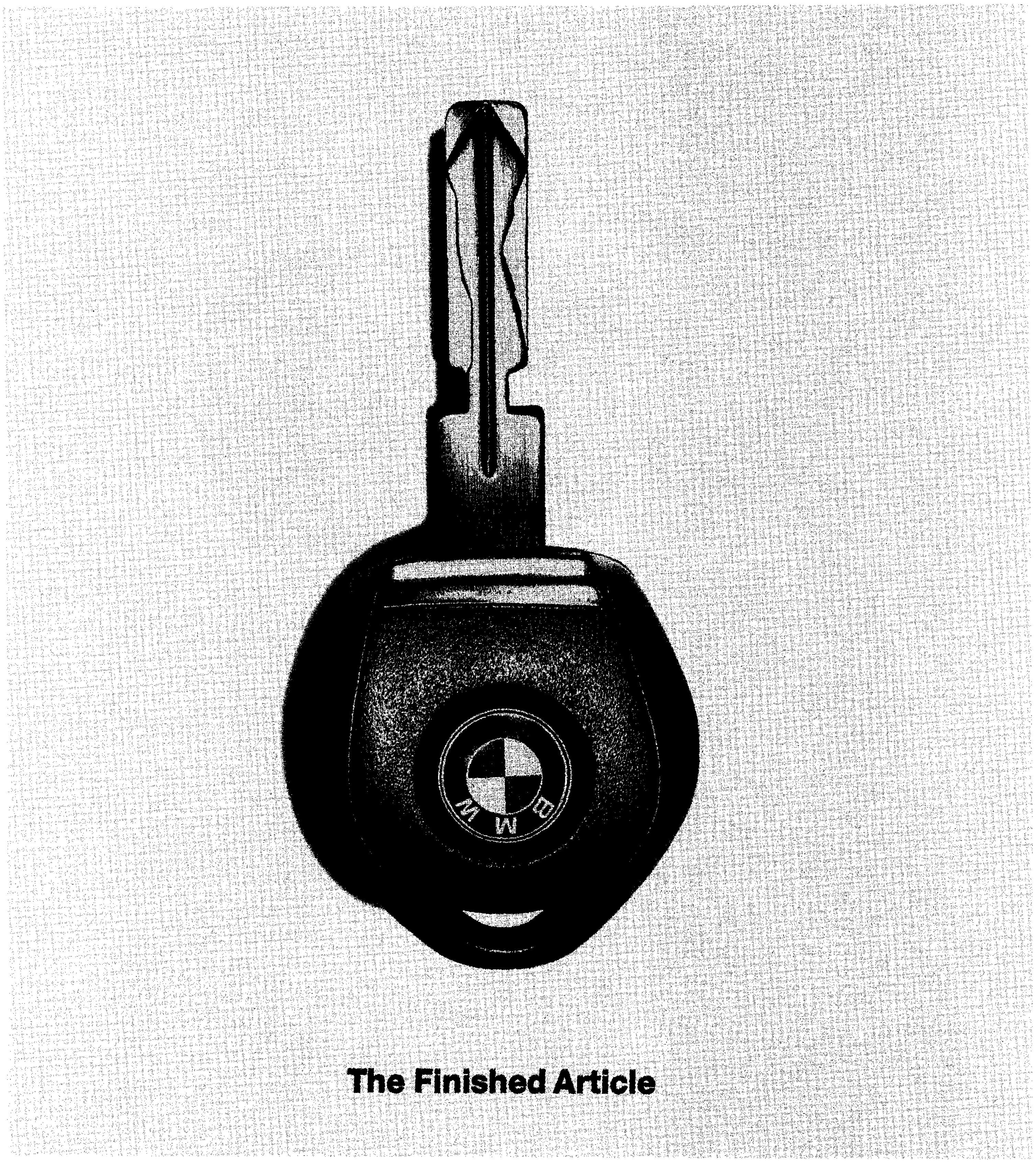

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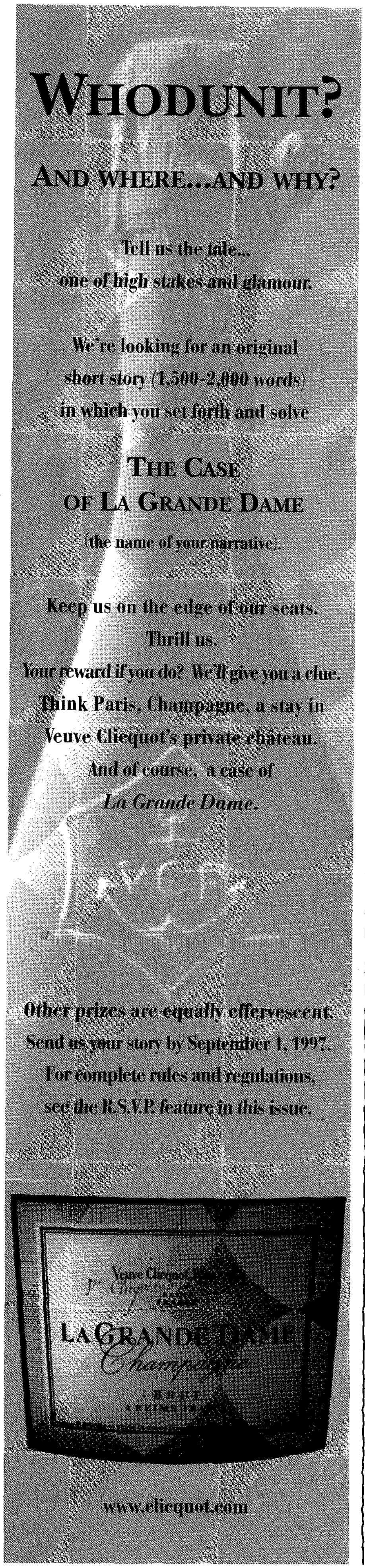

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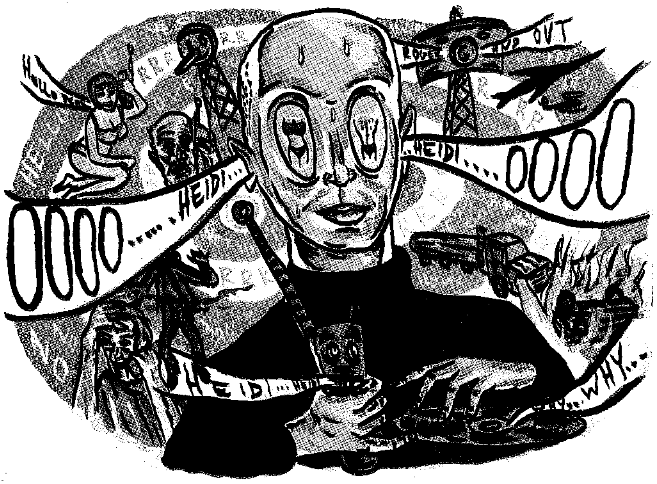
of muscular riffs with nothing more than a two-string bass, saxes, drums, and Mark Sandman's dark, haunted vocals. / Free-jazz saxophonist Sanders has actually mellowed over the years; his sonic maelstroms are now regularly tempered by soulful balladeering. (Central Park SummerStage. For information about tickets, which are required, call 307-7171. June 25 at 6:30.)

MOSE ALLISON—Listening to him slam the piano, you might think Jimmy Yancey had been possessed by Monk and Bartók. Southern gentleman Allison is nothing less than a national treasure. (World Financial Center Plaza. June 25 at 7. No tickets necessary.)



Scanner, spinning electronic music in the Anchorage.

GEORGE BENSON / JOHN MCLAUGHLIN QUINTET—Here's your chance to see if two guitar giants of the early seventies can still cut the mustard after twenty-plus years of pop, lite fusion, and other disparate diversions. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 25 at 8.)

"TO BARNEY KESSEL"—The six-string wizards are turning out to honor West Coast guitar legend Kessel, whose elegantly funky work has been heard with everyone from Lester Young and Charlie Parker to Oscar Peterson and Phil Spector. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 25 at 8.)

RUSH—Any band that has made more than twenty albums with the same lineup over more than twenty years deserves a fair amount of praise. That impressive record notwithstanding, Geddy Lee's screech is still one of the most abrasive instruments in rock. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 25 at 8.)

LYNYRD SKYNYRD / PAUL RODGERS—The reanimated Southern rock band meets the former lead singer of Bad Company. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 26 at 7.)

"SUMMER JAM"—A heavyweight hip-hop extravaganza, featuring Mary J. Blige, Wu-Tang Clan, Blackstreet, Heavy D, the Lost Boyz, and Sean (Puffy) Combs. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. June 26 at 7:30.)

ALL-STAR JAM / MCCOY TYNER GROUP—As pre-planned jam sessions go, this will do fine: Wynton Marsalis, Elvin Jones, James Carter, and the estimable John Lewis are on hand to (let's hope) find common ground. Tyner, one of the most influential of jazz pianists, opens the evening with his well-oiled trio. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 26 at 8.)

"25 YEARS OF 'HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ'"—Let's hear it for promoter Jack Kleinsinger, who's been presenting his eclectic, elegantly executed, and affordable jazz concerts for a lot longer than anybody would have predicted. With Highlights alumni Frank Foster, Frank Wess, Howard Alden, Gene Bertoncini, and others. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 26 at 8.)

FREE CONCERTS IN BRYANT PARK—June 27 at 5: Three groups led by three brilliant drummers—**ELVIN JONES**, **ROY HAYNES**, and **JOEY BARON**—plus a mesmerizing pianist, **JAMES WILLIAMS**. June 28 at 3: Four enlarged jazz ensembles—the **DANISH RADIO BIG BAND**, with the esteemed trombonist and composer **BOB BROOKMEYER**; **DON BYRON'S BUG MUSIC**, revisiting Raymond Scott and John Kirby; downtown saxophonist **THOMAS CHAPIN'S** trio, plus brass; and **ED PALMERO'S BIG BAND**, reinterpreting the music of Frank Zappa. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.)

KENNY BARRON AND MINO CINELU—The headliners may be the pianist and the percussionist (who, despite their singular talents, released a truly misguided recording last year), but the pairing of bassist Art Davis and pianist Horace Tapscott, two brilliant and seldom seen individualists, is the main event. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Brooklyn. June 27 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

RAY CHARLES—Brother Ray is an institution now, so we tend to forget that if he hadn't come along and just about singlehandedly invented it, soul music as we know it would probably not exist. Say "Amen, baby." (Avery Fisher Hall. June 27 at 8.)

TITO PUENTE / INDIA—A Latin-jazz jam with the flamboyant bandleader and the salsa diva. (Carnegie Hall. June 27 at 8.)

"THE UNKNOWN LOUIS AND BIX"—Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke may not have composed a lot, but what they did was, as they say, choice. Newly unearthed pieces by the yin and yang of the trumpet, while not quite the Dead Sea Scrolls of jazz, are certainly tantalizing. Among those presenting the discoveries are Randy Sandke, Ken Peplowski, and Nicholas Payton. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 27 at 8.)

THE STAPLE SINGERS—The always fine and funky gospel entertainers. (Central Park SummerStage. June 28 at 3.)

ANDY LASTER'S HYDRA—This quartet continues scoring with the ball that Ornette Coleman dropped when he abandoned his inventive, loose-limbed acoustic groups. (Tropicana Stage, South Street Seaport. June 28 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

STYX / PAT BENATAR—The prog-rock leviathans meet the tough and tender rocker. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 28 at 8. . . . ¶ Jones Beach Theatre. July 1 at 7:30.)

ISSAC DELGADO AND HIS ORCHESTRA—The acclaimed thirty-five-year-old singer, who is on his first extended tour outside Cuba. (Central Park SummerStage. June 29 at 3.)

DAVE DOUGLAS'S TINY BELL TRIO—They keep it minimal (just trumpet, drums, and guitar), but they stir up a lavish sound. (Biblio's, 317 Church St. 334-6990. June 30 at 9:30 and 10:30.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

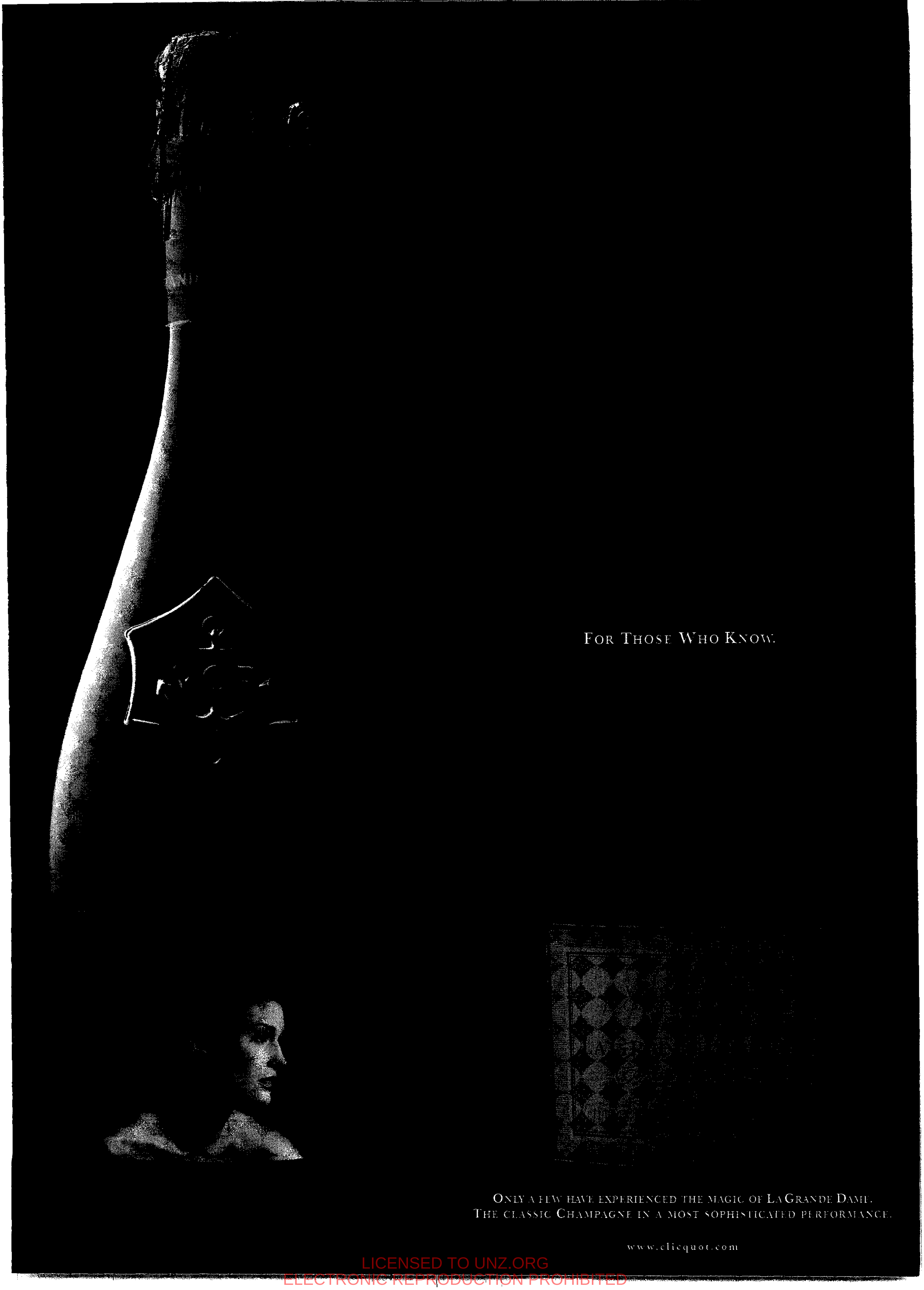
(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—June 19-21: Organist **JIMMY MC GRIFF** and his quartet. June 24: In-your-face drummer **RALPH PETERSON** and his band. June 24-25: Guitarist **DAVE STRYKER** and Blue to the Bone. June 25-28: The **PHIL WOODS** quintet. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 22: Fusion musicians abhor space every bit as much as nature abhors a vacuum, so don't expect much tonal legroom from a meeting of guitarists **LARRY CORYELL** and **BIRELI LAGRENE** and drummer **BILLY COBHAM**. Guitar legend **PAT MARTINO**, whose quartet opens the show, may provide some calm before the storm. June 24-29: Veteran **JOE HENDERSON** still holds the fort as jazz's most creative tenor saxophonist. Starting July 1: Guitarist **LARRY CARLTON**. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The inimitable **BOBBY SHORT** commands

DAVID SANDLIN



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INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

the Café Carlyle through June 28, accompanied by his eight-piece orchestra. On Mondays, **WOODY ALLEN** plays with the **EDDY DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND**. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 22: Vocalist **ABBEY LINCOLN.** June 24-29: Vibe-and-marimba stylist **BOBBY HUTCHERSON** and his quintet. Starting July 1: You can almost hear the grass on the savanna rustle as South African expatriate **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM** stirs up a lolling piano vamp; his trio rides its undulating rhythms expertly. Groove reigns here rather than technique—a welcome turn of events in jazz. Mondays belong to guitar pioneer **LES PAUL.** Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—The **TEXACO NEW YORK JAZZ FESTIVAL** is presenting gigs all over town, but the lion's share of the action is still on the Knit's several stages. Here are a few highlights. June 18: Pianist **CARLA BLEY** and electric bassist **STEVE SWALLOW** continue to make beautiful music together; formidable Panamanian pianist **DANILO PEREZ** leads a trio. June 19: Trumpeter **TOM HARRELL'S** inventive quintet features bassist **CAMERON BROWN,** drummer **MATT WILSON,** and saxophonist **GREG TARDY;** omnivorous saxophonist **THOMAS CHAPIN,** his longtime bassist **MARIO PAVONE,** and drummer **MICHAEL SARIN** make a rugged, intertwining, and, when the mood strikes, playful trio. June 21: Come early and plan to stay late. **MARTY EHRLICH'S** whip-smart band blurs the border between avant and mainstream with finesse and beauty; **DAVID S. WARE** envisions his sax as a weapon; **KENNY GARRETT** views his as a piano on which to explore spacious harmonies; pianist **ANTHONY COLEMAN'S SEPHARDIC TINGE** reshapes ethnic themes as modernist anthems; the expert bassist **MARK HELIAS'S OPEN/LOOSE** joins saxophonist **TIM BERNE** and drummer **TOM RAINEY.** June 22: **RICHARD DAVIS** was one of the key players in the sixties emancipation of the bass; drummer **ANDREW CYRILLE** and pianist **SIR ROLAND HANNA** will put his still remarkable achievements into relief. June 23: Bassist **MARIO PAVONE** leads a sextet, with **THOMAS CHAPIN** and **MARTY EHRLICH** holding down the reeds. June 25: Veteran pianist **DAVE BURRELL** personifies the best of neoclassicism—uncompromising individuality and in-the-moment gusto. He's backed by the alert bass-and-drum team of **REGGIE WORKMAN** and **CHARLI PERSIP.** June 26: **DEWEY REDMAN** is another of those crafty vets who, long before Wynton and company, were practicing the tenets of neoclassicism without making a big deal about it. He's got a razor-sharp band, well versed in the ways of avant-swing. June 27: Three popular pianists show off their diverse wares: **MATTHEW SHIPP** rumbles, **ELIANE ELIAS** bossas, and **CYRUS CHESTNUT** sashays. June 28: **EQUAL INTEREST,** in which the highly regarded pianist **MYRA MELFORD** collaborates with two avant heavyweights, violinist **LEROY JENKINS** and former Art Ensemble of Chicago reedman **JOSEPH JARMAN.** June 29: The stuffed-to-the-gills ensemble **ORANGE THEN BLUE** upholds the rights of orchestral jazz in the nineties. Then pianist **URI CAINE** interprets the music of Gustav Mahler with a band that includes drummer **BARRY ALTSCHUL,** trumpeter **DAVE DOUGLAS,** and **DJ OLIVE** on turntables. Roll over, Beethoven, and tell anyone who'll listen the news. June 30: **BOBBY PREVITE'S LATIN FOR TRAVELERS,** a power quartet that lustily exhibits yet another dimension of the super drummer's voracious imagination.

ROULETTE, 228 West Broadway (219-8242)—June 18: Drummer **ANDREW CYRILLE,** bassist **MARK DRESSER,** and reedman **MARTY EHRLICH,** a trio whose infrequent appearances only intensify the urgency and charge of their spontaneous interplay. June 21: It's teacher-mentor night as avant-garde trombone patriarch **ROSWELL RUDD** goes head to head with **STEVE SWELL,** an acclaimed acolyte.

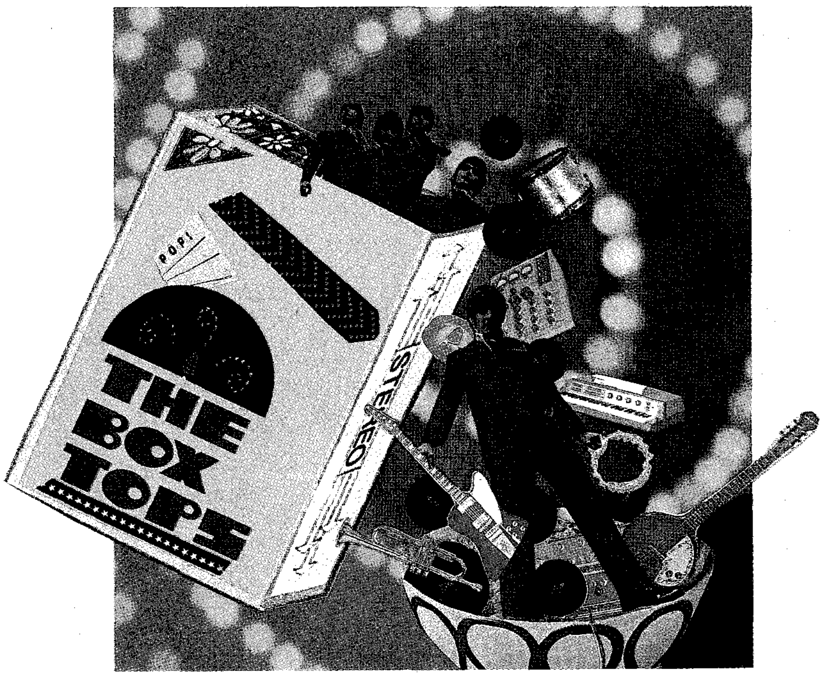
VILLAGE GATE, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—For the better part of two weeks the saxophonist, arranger, and composer **FRANK FOSTER** gets his due. Week No. 1 (June 19-22) finds the former Basie star fronting an all-star nonet that's out to encourage dance. Week No. 2 (June 26-28) will feature a more compact, hard-blowing quintet. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 22: **JIM HALL,** the poet laureate of jazz guitarists, augments his usual trio with saxophonist **CHRIS POTTER,** an adroit player who will add density and drama to the lyrical proceedings. June 24-29: The **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE** quartet. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through June 21: No better example of the vitality of chamber jazz can be found than the meeting of bassist **MICHAEL MOORE,** guitarist **HOWARD ALDEN,** and clarinettist **KEN PEPLOWSKI.** Bassist **RAY DRUMMOND** plays with pianist **KENNY BARRON** June 23-26 and with pianist **MULGREW MILLER** June 27-28.

ROCK, ETC.

ARLENE GROCERY, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—June 19-21: **RON SEXSMITH,** one of the best unknown singer-



The Box Tops reunite, at Tramps.

MARK ROZZO

songwriters out there. June 21: The country, folk, and rock sounds of the **HEALTH & HAPPINESS SHOW.**

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 20: "**R. & B. STARS OF NEW ORLEANS**" features ex-Meters guitarist **LEO NOCENTELLI,** vocalist **MARVA WRIGHT,** and an appearance by the accomplished writer, arranger, and producer **ALLEN TOUSSAINT.** June 21: "**BROTHERS IN BLUES,**" a rollicking jam with **ROY BLUMENFELD, AL KOOPER, ANDY KULBERG, JIMMY VIVINO,** and **JOHN SEBASTIAN.** On June 22, **THE LOSERS LOUNGE** deconstructs the music of Henry Mancini, with guest **BILLY STRITCH.** June 24: Funky blues with Choctaw singer and harp player **CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE.** Singer-songwriter **DAVID WILCOX** (June 26) tours with a band for the first time. June 30: Country-rock songwriter Rodney Crowell has finally given up his solo standing and joined his own backing band, resulting in the first tour of the **CICADAS.**

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—June 18: Local power pop with **44.** June 19: **MAYFIELD,** the new band of former Tears for Fears bassist-vocalist Curt Smith. June 20: Rock with **CLAWHAMMER** and the **TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE,** a band that features former members of Guided By Voices. The **KELLEY DEAL 6000** comes in June 24, and the wacky, all-female power trio known as **CAKE LIKE** is in on June 29.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 24: On her new album, "Ghostyhead," **RICKIE LEE JONES** takes on her oddest role yet: disco diva. June 25: English power pop with the **CHARLATANS U.K.** On June 26, **MY LIFE WITH THE THRILL KILL CULT** brings its over-the-top, B-52s-style kitsch-pop.

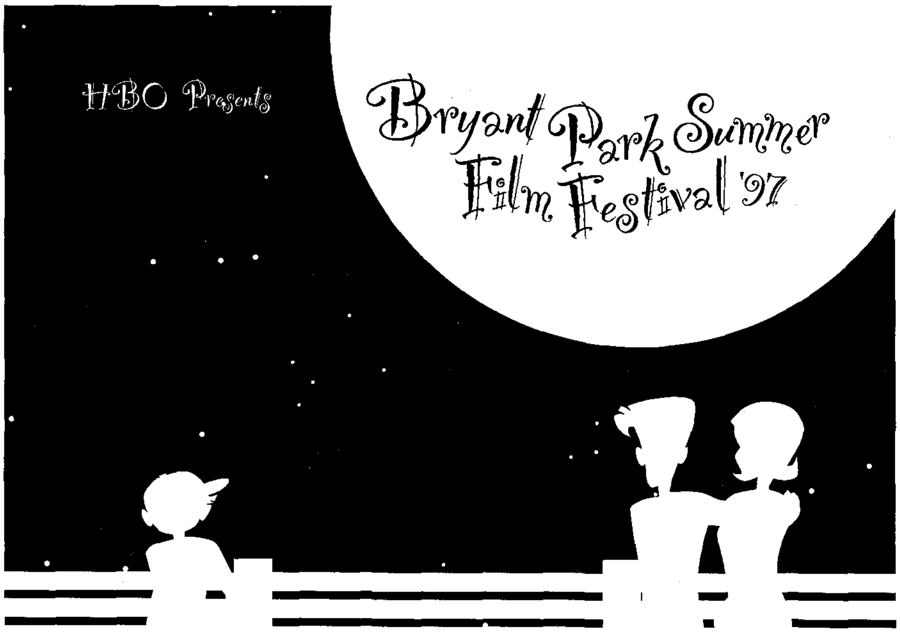
MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 18: The wistfully forthright folk-rock of **KATELL KEINEG.** June 19 and June 26: Country-flavored rock with the **IGUANAS.** June 21: *Mandolin-and-glockenspiel-flavored* Plains rock from **LULLABY FOR THE WORKING CLASS,** out of Lincoln, Nebraska. **10,000 MANIACS** return on June 24-25, without Natalie Merchant, of course, but with the excellent post-folk duo **ONCE BLUE** and the smart popster **HOLLY PALMER** in tow.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—June 18 and June 25: New York-via-Oklahoma songwriter **BRUCE HENDERSON,** who used to front the High Plains Drifters with G. E. Smith, rolls in for a month of Wednesdays.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—June 21: Brazilian diva **JULIANA AQUINO.** June 23: The New York-salsa pioneer outfit **MANNY OQUENDO Y CONJUNTO LIBRE.** June 28: Soca king **THE MIGHTY SPARROW.** Dining.

SUPPER CLUB, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—**JIMMY SCOTT** and **MADELEINE PEYROUX** are in on June 24. Even on songs you've heard dozens of times before, singer Scott makes you listen for the next lyric as if it were a password to love and happiness. / With her jazzy phrasing and astonishing clarity, the twenty-three-year-old Peyroux is capable of channelling the spirits of Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, and Patsy Cline. June 26: **LOU REED,** New York's finest monotonic rock singer. July 1: **DOGSTAR,** the rock-and-roll side career of Keanu Reeves.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—June 20: Lapsed rappers still hanging together: **RUN DMC,** the **SUGARHILL GANG,** and the **JUNGLE BROTHERS.** June 21: The **BOX TOPS** reunite for their first New York show in twenty-eight years. Back in 1967, Memphis Central High sophomore Alex Chilton walked into American Studios with a local garage band he had just joined and cut "The Letter." The sixteen-year-old's gravelly voice propelled the tune to No. 1. The Tops cranked out four albums of irresistible bubble-gum soul, including a few more chart hits, and then Chilton left to help form Big Star; he eventually became a cult figure of American underground pop. Expect more Gen Xers than you've ever seen at an oldies show. With the **SKELETONS.** June 22: Punk-pop out of Southern Cal with **FACE TO FACE.** Singer-songwriter **BEN HARPER** (June 24-25) plays lean, soulful folk-rock. June 26: Imitation-grunge chart climbers **SEVEN MARY THREE.** June 28: **CHUCK BROWN AND THE SOUL SEARCHERS** and **BOOTSY COLLINS** with his new outfit, Shag. July 1: Former Animal and War recruit **ERIC BURDON** and his band.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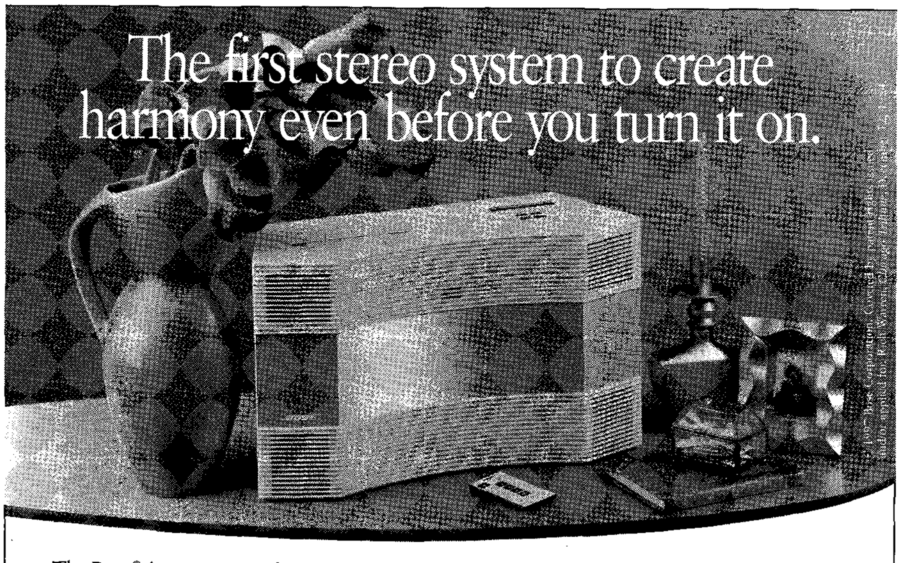
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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "Ivan Albright: Magic Realist," a centennial retrospective that includes paintings, watercolors, drawings, and lithographs by the American artist (1897-1983), whose clinically precise draftsmanship lent an eerie vitality to his treatment of decay. Through Sept. 7. . . . ¶ The museum's collection of Chinese art, one of the finest outside Asia, now has room to glow: after two years of construction, a new series of galleries nearly doubles the exhibition space. These cool, quiet rooms create the ideal atmosphere in which to grasp the rarefied sensibility of imperial Chinese painting and calligraphy. . . . ¶ "Indian Court Painting: Sixteenth-Nineteenth Century," a small exhibition that richly rewards a climb to the attic of the museum's South Asian department. A remarkable range of styles is in evidence, from a charming watercolor of a prince riding an elephant to a grisly, apocalyptic image of Devi, the Great Goddess, in a cremation field. Through July 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life," an exhibition devoted to domestic arrangements, from Cézanne's apples to Warhol's Campbell's soup cans. Through Aug. 26. . . . ¶ "Cindy Sherman: The Complete 'Untitled Film Stills.'" The artist poses in roles (ingénue, sex kitten, gun moll, débutante, etc.) for movies that never were, in a series of sixty-nine black-and-white photographs taken in the late seventies and early eighties. Opens June 26 and continues through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Paris/The 1890s" examines the fin-de-siècle printmaking of Bonnard, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Vuillard, and others. Opens June 19 and continues through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Stenberg Brothers: Constructing a Revolution in Soviet Design." A retrospective of the work of the polymath siblings Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg, whose radical ideas for bridges, automotive plants, women's shoes, and movie posters set the tone for the early Soviet avant-garde. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "More Than One: Twentieth Century Print Portfolios." Through Sept. 2. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"From Dürer to Rauschenberg: A Quintessence of Drawing." A coöperative venture with Vienna's Albertina Graphics Collection presents masterpieces of draftsmanship, from finished portraits to sketchbook whimsies, by seventeen artists, including Raphael, Rembrandt, Fragonard, Kandinsky, and Beuys. Opens June 20 and continues through Aug. 24. . . . ¶ Large-scale sculpture by the Basque minimalist Cristina Iglesias, who favors forthright urban materials—concrete, iron, glass, etc.—and delicately etched surfaces. Opens June 20. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Keith Haring retrospective gathers early drawings, graffiti, subway posters, large-scale paintings, photos, and videos of site-specific projects by the conscience of the eighties club scene, who died in 1990. Opens June 25 and continues through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "Frank Lloyd Wright, Designs for an American Landscape: 1922-32" presents five projects, never realized, in several stages: drawings, architectural models, and newly created computer projections. Opens June 25 and continues through Sept. 14. . . . ¶ "Collection in Context: Rockwell Kent by Night." Through Sept. 14. . . . ¶ Twenty-five photographs by Larry Fink, of boxers and their camp followers. Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"The Lost World: The Life and Death of Dinosaurs." Fossils, time lines, and a re-creation of a paleontological dig, displayed in the shadow of a seventy-foot-long reconstruction of a mamenchisaurus. Through Sept. 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Process on Paper: Recent Acquisitions." Prints (Lyonel Feininger, Louise Bourgeois, Vito Acconci), drawings (John Singer Sargent, Kiki Smith), and photographs (Roy De Carava, Lorna Simpson) demonstrate the technical range of works on paper. Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ "From Pockets to Pouches: Three Centuries of Handbags." Through June 22. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5, and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—"Enlightenment Embodied: The Art of the Japanese Buddhist Sculptor." To inaugurate its exquisitely redesigned galleries, and to celebrate its ninetieth anniversary, the society has assembled a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of Japanese Buddhist sculptures, ranging from a tiny, naïve bronze of the infant Siddhartha to a life-size thirteenth-century polychrome wood carving of the reclining Buddha at the point of death. Through July 6. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Points of Entry," three photography exhibitions ("A Nation of Strangers," "Reframing America," and "Tracing Cultures") exploring immigration. Through Aug. 17. . . . ¶ "Chicken Soup and Wontons: Jews and Food on American Television," a video installation, with television footage drawn from the National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting, considers Jewish cooking and Jewish stereotypes, from "The Goldbergs" to "The Nanny." Through Sept. 28. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Socrates Sculpture Park, Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-956-1819)—New work is on show at the East River beachhead, by Ron Baron, Luisa Caldwell, JJ Veronis, Quido Sen, and Mark di Suvero, among others. (Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Steve McQueen—Four films by the young British artist, whose work will be included in the Documenta X show this summer, in Kassel. As arty and elliptical as their narratives are (very broadly, the themes seem to be race and sexuality), their style is quite successful. They all feel very British and very right-now. Through June 28. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays.)

Odd Nerdrum—Using heightened chiaroscuro, scumbled pigment, heavy impasto, and even yellowing varnish, Nerdrum manages to reproduce perfectly the painterly techniques of the Netherlandish Baroque school. His allegorical subjects, though, are refracted through a contemporary, neurotic sensibility. Through June 27. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

At Socrates Sculpture Park, new works installed for the summer.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949)—An ample, well-mounted survey of works in many mediums by the Uruguayan artist and writer of manifestos, who at various stages espoused virtually every major style of modernism. The strongest works are abstract paintings in the geometric style of Mondrian, rendered with funky, expressionist élan, and grids of symbols in the faux-naïve style of Paul Klee, which resemble hieroglyphic telegrams from a Middle Kingdom scribe living on the Left Bank between the wars. Through July 30. (Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288.)

"Contemporary Figures"—A livelier than usual look at what painters are doing with the human form these days. Among the highlights: "Wayne Pond Posing as Jesus for Our Time," Jerome Witkin's humorous, monumental charcoal study of a young man in a cheap suit and sneakers; Jorge Santos's startling psychological study, in acrylic and pencil, of a boy daydreaming about being an aviator; some stylish latter-day cubism by Michael Madzo; and vintage camp from Paul Cadmus—a tempera of an angelic nude housecleaner vacuuming the artist's bookshelves, as a wee squirrel looks on. Through July 1. (MB Modern, 41 E. 57th St. 371-3444.)

"Latin American Masterpieces" / Saint Clair Cemin—A superb grab bag, comprising a quirky little

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Frida Kahlo (a classic self-portrait with a tiny image of Diego Rivera infixed on her forehead); a pair of enigmatic Roberto Mattas; ghostly little allegories by Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington; sculptures by Fernando Botero and Rufino Tamayo; and some powerful political tracts, including a painting of the Zapatista army by José Clemente Orozco, and a reproduction of a hallucinatory anti-Fascist mural by Juan O'Gorman which hung at the airport in Mexico City until the Mexican government destroyed it, in 1938. / Four monumental works, in steel, iron, bronze, and mahogany, by the Brazilian sculptor. Both shows through June 20. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

Short List—**PAT ADAMS,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 21. . . . **RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through June 28. . . . **ELENA CLIMENT,** Martin, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-2213. Through June 28. . . . **MORRIS GRAVES,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through July 31. . . . **MARÍA IZQUIERDO,** Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. 249-8950. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 6; through July 27. . . . **WHITFIELD LOVELL,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through July 11. . . . **HENRI MATISSE,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St., 265-8876; through June 28. Also at Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St., 535-8810; through June 20. . . . **CHARLES SELIGER,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Through Aug. 20. . . . **WAYNE THIEBAUD,** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870. Through June 27. . . . **PETER WAITE,** Winston Wächter, 111 E. 65th St. 327-2529. Through July 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Gary Hume—Enamel paintings that alternately evoke the swinging London of the sixties and American Pop of the same period, rendered with a cool *fin de millénaire* sensibility. Through June 27. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200. Opens at noon; closed Sundays.)

Brice Marden—Two superb new calligraphic paintings, displayed alongside five epitaph stones from the T'ang and Northern Wei dynasties on whose designs they are loosely based. Through June 27. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

Meg Webster—"Blue Sky," a two-part sculptural installation. The front gallery (plus a bit of sidewalk space) is taken up by "An Arrangement of Local Stones," a collection of large boulders; the more obviously arty rear-gallery installation consists of large blown-glass orbs, a snippet of silly wall text, and two videos featuring sheep. The former is derivative but unobjectionable; the latter, just plain bad. Through June 28. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

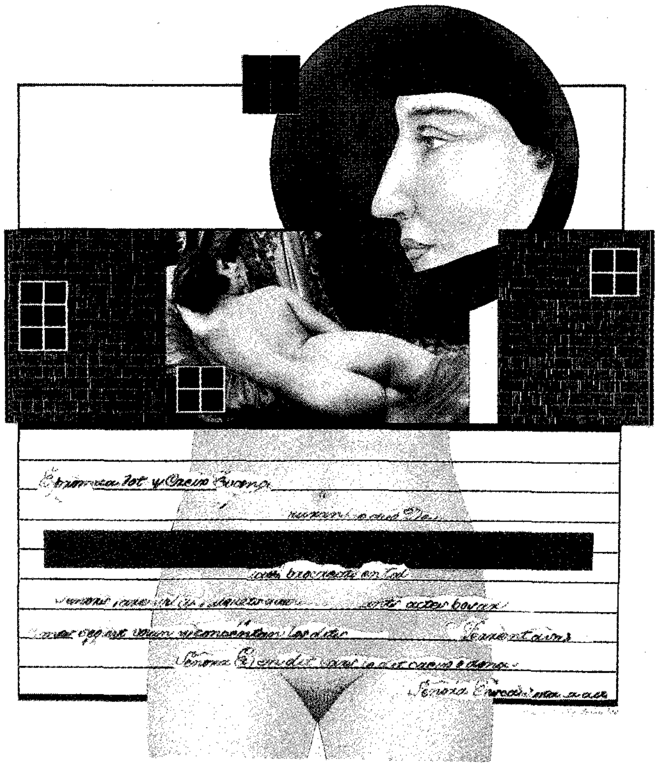
Short List—**TONY FEHER,** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through June 21.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Elaine Lustig Cohen—Neo-Dada all over again. The artist has combined three of her previous careers—as graphic designer, abstract painter, and antiquarian book dealer—into one by incorporating old engravings and photographs into boldly designed, neatly executed collages that echo the Bauhaus and fairly scream Max Ernst. Through June 28. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

Mark di Suvero—"Inner Sculpture for Euler," a massive new work that takes over the entire space of this capacious gallery. Huge steel beams traverse its length; the center is a void. With typically theatrical panache, di Suvero places the viewer literally inside his sculpture. Through June 21. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Gilbert and George—"The Fundamental Pictures," a two-gallery exhibition by the British duo. Their "Naked Shit Pictures" were a sensation in London a few years ago; this latest work continues exploring themes from that series. In each picture, the pair appears naked against an apparently abstract background that is actually an enlargement of a microscopic image of one of the substances the artists consider fundamental to life: blood, semen, feces, or urine. As always, their pictures have tremendous formal brio, although the crazy humor of the earlier pieces is tempered in these more abstract ones. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway, 966-6160; and Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St., 965-0753. Both shows through June 28.)



"Tell Me," by Elaine Lustig Cohen, at Saul.

Martin Kippenberger (1953-97)—German funkiness on a grand scale. There's a set of floor lamps made from clear resin encasing cigarettes, matches, and colorful throwaway lighters. There are resin eggs flanked by crossbones and filled with miniature booze bottles and "Do Not Disturb" doorknob hangers. There are sweaty erotic photographs and drawings of adolescent female athletes, matted and framed with pairs of panties. Kippenberger was a man of many mediums: there are also enigmatic ceramic plates, pornographic drawings, satirical posters, and hideous little sculptures of gnomes. Through June 27. (Nolan/Eckman, 560 Broadway. 925-6190.)

John McCracken—Monoliths, planks, and wall-mounted sculptures, made of plywood, resin, and fibreglass, by the minimalist sculptor. His work has always been distinguished by his attention to finish and surface; these new pieces are characterized by seamless facture and by highly polished, reflective surfaces. Through June 21. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

Alexis Rockman—"Dioramas," elaborate mixed-medium pictures incorporating painted and sculpted elements, digitized photographs, objets trouvés, etc., all encased in heavy resin blocks. The artist specializes in eco-conscious Grand Guignol: like Damien Hirst and Mark Dion, he is interested in the phenomena of nature run amok or, at least, gone awry. Through June 28. (Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480.)

"Candy Darling: Always a Lady"—At this point, drag almost seems more folkloric than transgressive. But, in the sixties and seventies, Candy Darling, né James Slattery of Massapequa Park, Long Island, was one of the truly singular stars in that weirdo pantheon known as Andy Warhol's Factory. She died young, in the mid-seventies, of cancer. This exhibition gathers photographs and video clips, most of which show her to extraordinary effect. Through June 21. (Feature, 76 Greene St. 941-7077.)

Short List—**TOYCE ANDERSON,** June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through July 3. . . . **KAREN FINLEY,** Fotouhi Cramer, 560 Broadway. 431-1304. Through June 28. . . . **FRANK GEHRY** and **SOL LE WITT,** Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599. Both shows through Aug. 15. . . . **ELIZABETH MURRAY,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through June 20. . . . **LOUIS RENZONI** and **DUANE STAPP,** Foster, 62 Crosby St. 966-9024. Both shows through June 21. . . . **JULIE ROBERTS,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through July 3.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Helen Levitt / Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904)—Forty vintage New York prints from 1936 to 1945. (See also I.C.P. Midtown.) / Twenty-five collotypes from his 1887 study, "Human and Animal Locomotion." Both shows through June 27. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

Eric Lindbloom—Bucolic but not too sweet Hudson Valley panoramas. A picture of deep-winter ice floes near Kingston has a perfect sense of place; a view of a farmhouse on a rolling Saratoga battlefield wonderfully conveys the joys of isolation. Through June 21. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

Fred W. McDarrah—The erstwhile picture editor of the *Village Voice* has been chronicling the lavender life in New York from the Stonewall rebellion, in 1969, to the present; a selection of his most important photographs will be on display June 27-29, the anniversary of the riot. (Art et Industrie, 52 Thompson St. 966-6800.)

John Pfahl—"Niagara Sublime," an often exhilarating new series comprising two dozen color views of the Horseshoe and American Falls. Titles like "Spectral Vapors" and "Thunder-Riven Brow," taken from a bit of Tennyson's juvenilia, nearly stifle the mood, but not quite. Through June 30. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

Lynn Saville—The best of Saville's grainy yet creamy nighttime silver prints (laundry hanging in the woods off the back porch; a watery rear-window city view) hum with an electricity that makes the familiar new. Through June 28. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Car Culture: The Automobile in 20th Century Photography"—A fun, crowded show of more than a hundred and twenty pictures, from a brilliant skewed race car by Jacques Henri Lartigue to a smoke-filled back seat by Nan Goldin. Other artists in the show include Garry Winogrand, William Klein, Inge Morath, Ray K. Metzker, Simpson Kalisher, and Dorothea Lange. Through June 21. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Glorious Gardens"—Inflorescent imagery from throughout the present century, by such artists as Atget, Sudek, Blossfeldt, Porter, and Meyerowitz. Through June 28. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—Lauren Greenfield's "Fast Forward," a series of terrifying slices of adolescent life in Los Angeles: coolly sensational color photographs and texts from interviews with the subjects. They make it seem as if all the children of show-business executives have BMWs, nose jobs, and six-figure catered parties under their

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belts before they graduate from high school. Through July 13. (Another show of prints from this series is at Saul, 560 Broadway, 431-0747, through June 28.) . . . ¶ "Helen Levitt: Crosstown," a thoroughgoing retrospective spanning five decades of photographic anthropology on the streets of New York. The exhibition leaves one with an impression of remarkable continuity in the life of the city: if it weren't for the automobiles and the hats, you'd barely be able to distinguish the forties from the eighties. Through Sept. 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

ONLY CONNECT

India: The Best (http://http.tamu.edu/~r0k5147/html/India.html)—There are, fittingly, millions of India Web sites out there, some sponsored by corporations, some the by-products of travel guides and other such resources. The finest ones, though, are labors of love, like Rajneesh Khanna's page. His table of contents alone is more comprehensive than many other India sites are in their entirety, and his passions are laid out like postage stamps in a collector's album. (Indeed, one of his passions *is* postage stamps.) You want news? Khanna links to the on-line edition of *The Hindu*, a national newspaper. Music? Try the Geet (Song) Quiz, a sort of "Name That Tune" of Indian popular song. ("For the clue '*Logon ko aatay hain do nazar hum magar dekho to nahin. . .*,' the correct answer would be '*Ye dosti hum nahin chhoRengay. . . .*' ") You want linguistic help, to translate the music quiz? This is the place to download transliteration software and those hard-to-find Punjabi Gurmukhi fonts.

Khanna, a Texas A. & M. alumnus, has done the dirty work of visiting the myriad India sites you would find using any decent search engine, and India: The Best is largely an aggregate of links. Some lead to a dead end (Khanna's bio page is currently unavailable), but by and large The Best really does represent the best. There are plenty of film sites out there devoted to the flourishing Hindi film biz, but Khanna links to Bollywood, the first and still the glitziest of the bunch, with its Bollyhunks, Bollychat, and, of course, Bollydolls. There are also links arranged by city, district, and state—you'll even find a good recipe for dal *kofta* curry here. That's steamed *toor* balls in buttermilk to you, bub.

Short List—**MARIO ALGAZE,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through July 5. . . . **ROBERT BLACKMON,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through June 28. . . . **MARILYN BRIDGES,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through July 31. . . . **MIKE DISFARMER** and **HERBERT MATTER,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Both shows through July 3. . . . **DAVE HEATH,** Lowinsky, 578 Broadway. 226-5440. Through June 28. . . . **TINA MODOTTI,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through June 21. . . . **JOSÉ PICAYO,** Rice, 325 W. 11th St. Open Thursdays through Saturdays, 1 to 7; Sundays, 1 to 6; through June 29. . . . **THOMAS STRUTH,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through June 28. . . . **PIERRE VERGER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through June 28. . . . **AUGUSTINA VON NAGEL,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through July 3. . . . **FRANK YAMRUS,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Tuesdays; through June 29.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Jewish Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—The Met presents concert performances of two operas in this season's free parks programs. **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA** and **PAGLIACCI**, with Maria Guleghina, Fabio Armiliato, and Frederick Burchinal in the former and Daniela Dessì, Vladimir Bogachov, Bruno Pola, and Mark Oswald in the latter; Christian Badea conducts both. (North Meadow, Central Park. June 18 at 8. . . . ¶ Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx. June 20 at 8.) . . . With Stefka Estatieva instead of Ms. Guleghina. (Cunningham Park, Queens. June 25 at 8.) . . . With Eva Urbanová, Vahan Khanzadian, and Mr. Burchinal in the former and Elizabeth Holleque, Antonio Barasorda, Mr. Pola, and Kim Josephson in the latter; Mr. Badea. (Gateway–N.R.A., Miller Field, Staten Island. June 28 at 8.) . . . ¶ **CARMEN,** with Ainhoa Arteta, Denyce Graves, Neil Rosenshein, and Greer Grimsley; Yves Abel. (Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. June 19 at 8.) . . . With Hei-Kyung Hong, Ms. Graves, Vinson Cole, and Gino Quilico; Mr. Abel. (North Meadow, Central Park. June 24 at 8.) . . . With Mr. Grimsley instead of Mr. Quilico. (Marine Park, Brooklyn. June 27 at 8.) (For information about locations and rain dates and about performances in New Jersey, call 212-362-6000.)

Opera Manhattan—Massenet's "Cléopâtre," premièred in 1914, in Monte Carlo, was the last of the composer's twenty-four operas. It met with little success, largely (it has been suggested) owing to the producer's decision to cast a soprano in the title role, which generally lies in a lower tessitura. This semi-staged concert production, the first ever in the United States, rectifies that misjudgment: the lead will be sung by Florence Quivar, the ultra-dependable mezzo-soprano, whose unusually broad repertoire proclaims an eagerness to undertake such recherché roles as this. Soprano Tamara Wright Acosta portrays Octavie, Marc-Antoine's wife and Cléopâtre's rival for his love. Baritone Hector Vasquez and tenor Neal Harrelson complete the cast, and Gabriel Guimarães conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 26 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

American Russian Youth Orchestra—This ensemble was founded in 1987 to bring together young musicians from the United States and Russia for intensive rehearsal and touring. The intercultural aspect may have become less urgent since the demise of the Soviet Union, but the musical need has not diminished, as both countries continue to turn out more performers than either can possibly hope to employ. This kickoff concert of the group's current tour comprises music from both nations: the première of Libby Larsen's "A Spell on Me That Holy Hour: Overture to Tsvetaeva," Bernstein's "Fancy Free," Barber's Cello Concerto (featuring Joseph Johnson), Glazunov's Violin Concerto (with Julia Krasko), and Tchaikovsky's rarely heard "Moscow Coronation Cantata" (with four vocal soloists). Leon Botstein, Mark Mandarano, and Dmitri Liss take turns at the podium. (Carnegie Hall. June 18 at 7:30)

Gay Gotham Chorus—Donald Messer directs works by Poulenc, Howard Rosner, John David Earnest, Lee Hoiby, and Dean X. Johnson. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 18 at 8.)

Carlos Franzetti Quartet and **Bronx Choral Society Singers**—In a celebration of the summer solstice, the quartet performs a selection from the "new tango" repertoire, and the choir offers music by Philip Glass, Hildegard of Bingen, and Lisa Bielawa (a première). (Ross Lecture Hall, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park. June 22 at 3. For information about tickets, call 718-601-7399.)

Goldman Memorial Band—Gene Young conducts works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Mendels-

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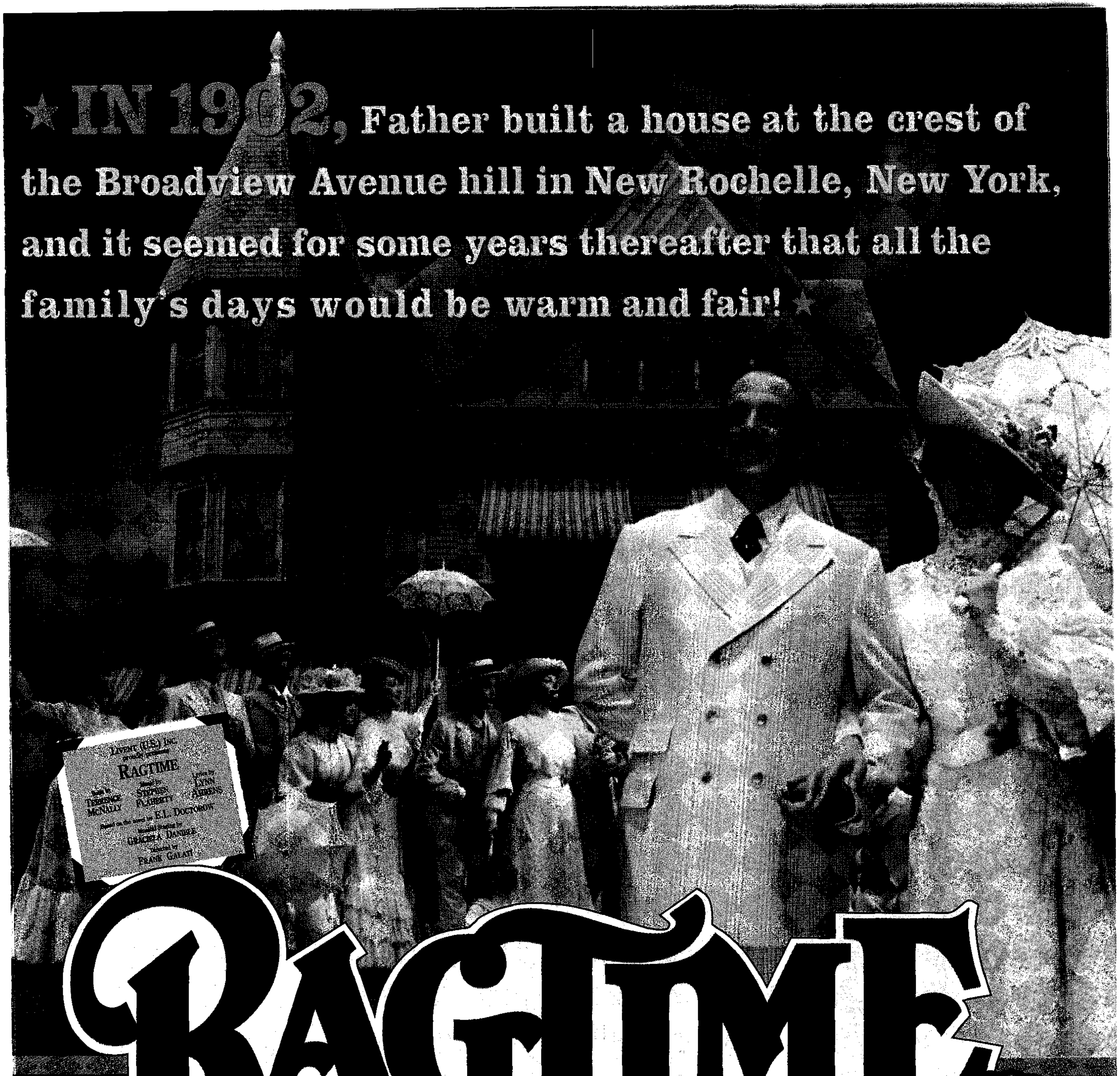
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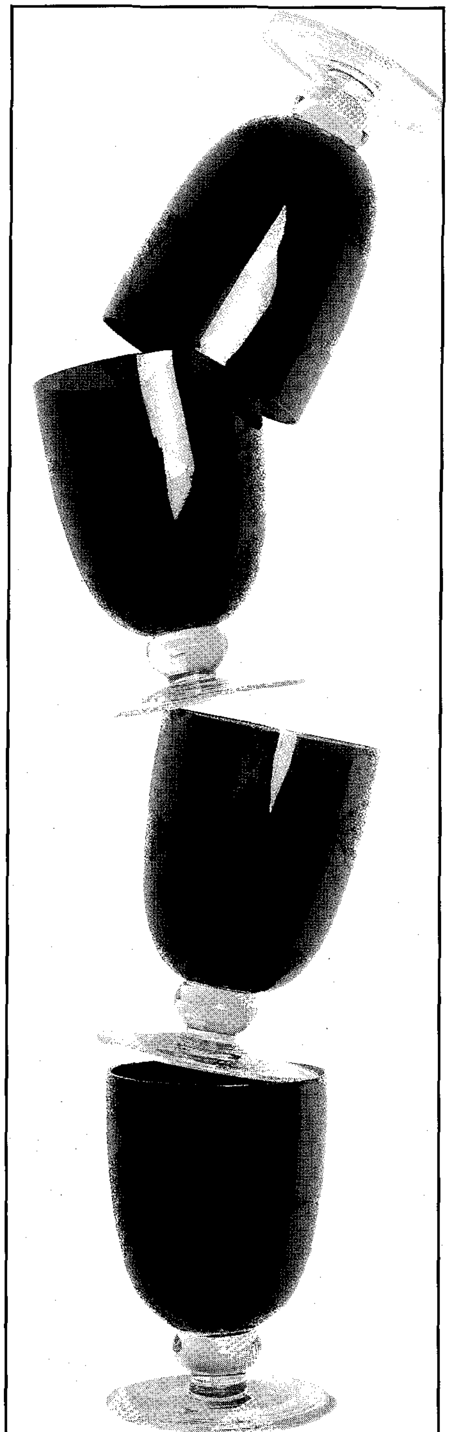

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sohn (the "Ruy Blas" Overture), James Reese Europe, William Grant Still, and others. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 22 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

New York City Gay Men's Chorus—The ensemble performs "Naked Man," a fifteen-movement choral song cycle on aspects of gay life, with music by Robert Seeley and texts by Philip Littell. Gary Miller directs. (Carnegie Hall. June 23 at 8.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads such popular classics as Rossini's "William Tell" Overture and Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture." (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 23 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

National Chorale—Performing songs by Berlin, Porter, and Bernstein, with Martin Josman directing. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 24 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

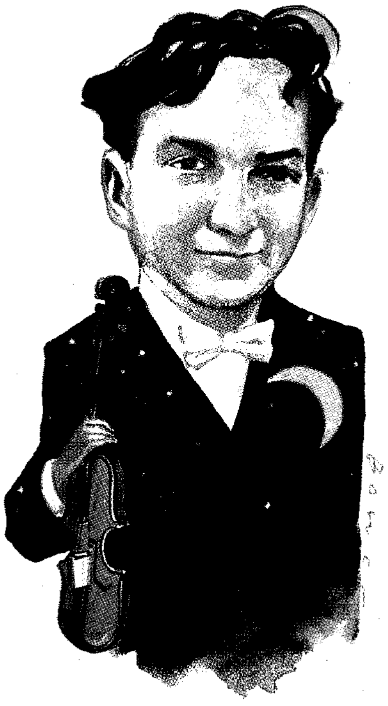
Washington Square Music Festival—Free outdoor concerts. June 24 at 8: The Festival Chamber Ensemble offers Brahms's Clarinet Trio, Mozart's Piano Quartet in G-Minor, and Schumann's Piano Quintet. . . . ¶ July 1 at 8: The festival's wind players perform an all-Beethoven program comprising his Octet (Op. 103), "Fidelio" Overture, and Symphony No. 7 (the latter two pieces in arrangements for wind instruments). (Washington Square Park. No tickets necessary. In case of rain, the concerts will be held at New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St.)

Music from Aston Magna—The early-music singers and instrumentalists perform Handel's "The Triumph of Time and Truth," written in 1707 (while the composer was completing his formative stay in Rome) but substantially revised in 1738 and again in 1758—a compositional history that gives it the distinction of being both his first and his last oratorio. The soloists are soprano Sharon Baker, mezzo-soprano Judith Malafronte, countertenor Jeffrey Gall, and tenor William Hite. Daniel Stepner leads from the first-violin desk. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 29 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

Eleonor Bindman—Pianist, performing Bach's Partita No. 5, Beethoven's C-Major Sonata (Op. 2, No. 3), Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel," and her own transcription of Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. June 18 at 8.)

Bargemusic—June 19 at 7:30 and June 22 at 4: Piano quartets by Mozart (in E-Flat Major) and Brahms (in A Major), performed by violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Toby Hoffman, cellist Eugene Osadchy, and pianist Paul Ostrovsky. . . . ¶ June 20 at 7:30: Messrs. Peskanov, Hoffman, and Osadchy play Mozart's E-Flat-Major Divertimento (K. 563), and oud player Simon Shaheen presides over an improvising ensemble of Middle Eastern musicians. . . . ¶ June 26 at 7:30 and June 29 at 4: String quartets by Beethoven (in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4) and Schubert (in D Minor, "Death and the Maiden"), performed by Mr. Peskanov, violinist Yuri Vodovoz, violist Victoria Chiang, and cellist Nathaniel Rosen. . . . ¶ June 27 at 7:30: Messrs. Peskanov and Ostrovsky perform Beethoven's C-Minor Violin Sonata, soprano DeBorge Pinnington offers two songs by Schubert, and Mr. Rosen joins his fellow-instrumentalists for piano trios by Shostakovich (in C Minor) and Tchaikovsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)



Gil Shaham, at Caramoor.

TIM BOWER

Keith Bonner and Reva Youngstein—Flutists, performing duets and other chamber works by Robert Muczynski, Chester Biscardi, Gary Shocker, Jeffrey Mumford, Eugène Bozza, and Bach (his G-Major Trio Sonata and Fourth "Brandenburg" Concerto, with colleagues assisting). (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. June 20 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

Mariko Anraku—The harpist, who won first prize in the 1995 Concert Artists Guild Competition, presents a recital that includes music by Handel, C. P. E. Bach, Fauré, and R. Murray Schafer. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 23 at 7.)

Carlo Grante—The pianist offers twelve Scarlatti sonatas, as well as Godowsky's transcriptions of three Schubert songs and nine Chopin études. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 26 at 8.)

Lionheart—The six-member men's vocal ensemble performs chant, organum, and conductus from twelfth-century France. (St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. June 27 at 8. For information about tickets, call 663-2402.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—Opening performances of the season, which continues through Aug. 31. June 20-21 at 7: A production of Luigi Rossi's 1647 opera, "Orfeo," fully staged, with lavish costumes borrowed from the Drottningholm Court Theatre, in Sweden, which was presented earlier this month at the Boston Early Music Festival. Soprano Cyndia Sieden appears as Euridice, soprano Ellen Hargis portrays Orfeo, and Peter Holman conducts. . . . ¶ June 22 at 2:30: The Boston Symphony Chamber Players, with pianist Gilbert Kalish, offer works by Mozart and Shostakovich. . . . ¶ June 27 at 8:30: Kimbo Ishii-Eto leads the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, with pianist Benjamin Pasternack, in works by Irving Fine, Schubert, Varèse, and Mozart. . . . ¶ June 28 at 7: The festival's official opening night brings together soprano Kelley Nassief, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, pianists Leon Fleisher and Marcus Roberts, the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, with Seiji Ozawa on the podium. . . . ¶ June 29 at 2:30: Mr. Fleisher and the Boston Symphony Chamber Players present music by Mozart and Dohnányi. (Lenox, Mass. 413-637-1600.)

Long Island Mozart Festival—The Sea Cliff Chamber Players anchor the festival's final weekend. (Sands Point Preserve, Port Washington. June 21-22. For information, call 516-671-6263.)

Maverick Concerts—Opening events of the festival's eighty-second season, which continues through Sept. 14. June 21, from 5 to 9: A Midsummer's Eve celebration, with surprise musical guests. . . . ¶ June 29 at 3: The Mendelssohn String Quartet plays quartets by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1) and Janáček (his First, "The Kreutzer Sonata"); pianist Ursula Oppens joins them for Brahms's Piano Quintet. (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

Opera Festival of New Jersey—Opening performances of the season, which continues through July 20. June 21 and June 27 at 8 and June 29 at 2: "La Cenerentola," performed in

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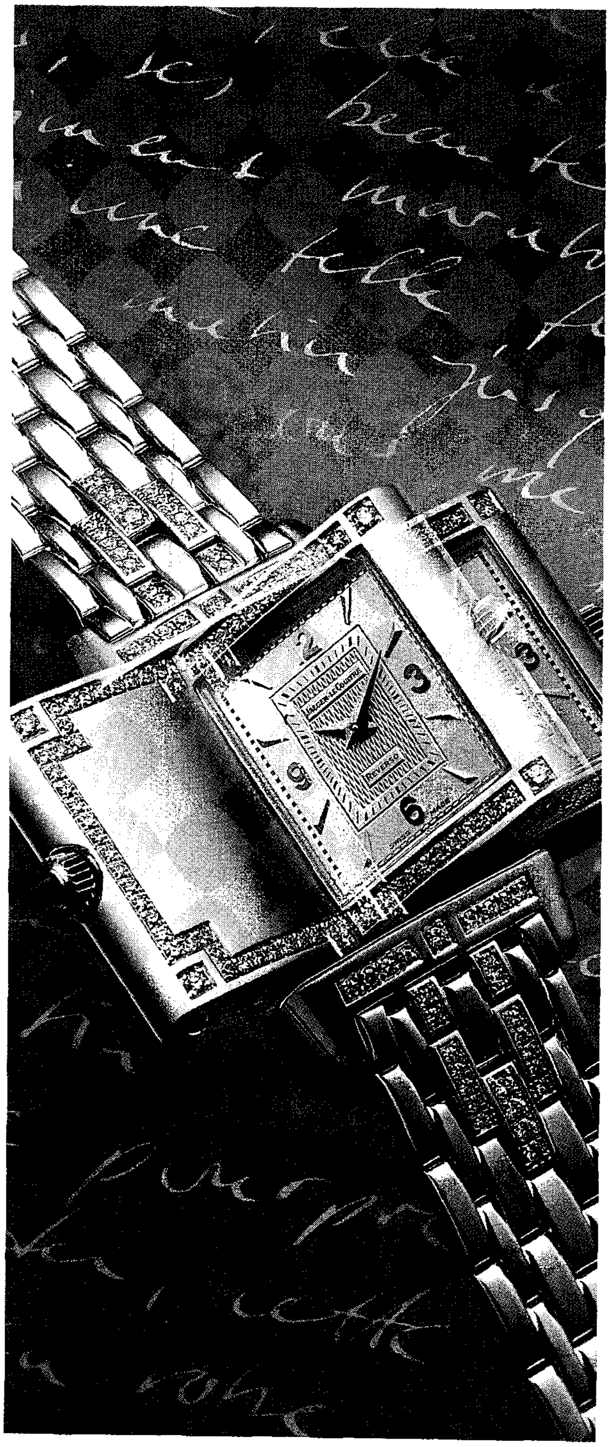

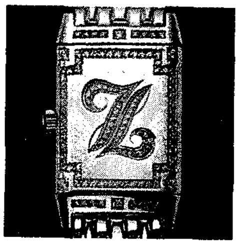

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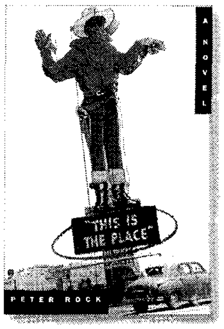
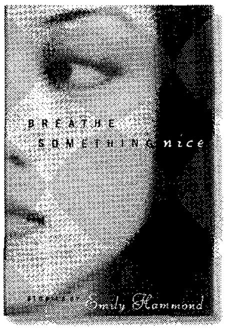


This Is the Place
by Peter Rock
In a desert town between Nevada and Utah, an aged blackjack dealer's doomed love for a beautiful Mormon girl leaves them both irrevocably scarred. (Anchor Books)
Pub. Price $12.00

Breathe Something Nice
by Emily Hammond
An alluring collection of short stories that explores, with poignancy and wit, the unacknowledged complexities in even the most ordinary relationships. (University of Nevada Press)
Pub. Price $12.00



Andrew Miller
Ingenious Pain

Ingenious Pain
by Andrew Miller
This evocative novel follows the rise, fall and redemption of an 18th-century Englishman born without the ability to feel pain. (Harcourt Brace)
Pub. Price $24.00
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Soul Kiss
by Shay Youngblood
With haunting eroticism, this lyrical first novel traces the unsettling coming of age of a lonely African-American girl in the rural South. (Riverhead Books)
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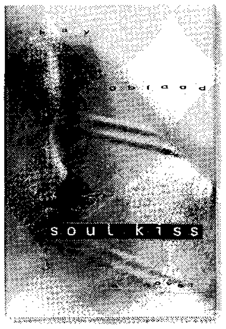

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English. . . . ¶ June 28 at 8: "Faust." (Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N.J. 609-683-8000.)

Music Mountain—June 21 at 8: The Galvanized Jazz Band. . . . ¶ June 22 at 3: The Leontovitch String Quartet. . . . ¶ June 28 at 8: The Alan Simon Jazz Quartet, featuring saxophonist Ralph LaLama. . . . ¶ June 29 at 3: The Notturno from Borodin's Quartet No. 2, Brahms's C-Minor Quartet, and Schubert's C-Major String Quintet, performed by the St. Petersburg String Quartet (assisted by cellist Roman Mekinulov). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. The season continues through Aug. 31.)

Caramoor—Opening concerts of the festival's fifty-second season, which runs through Aug. 10. June 21 at 8:30: David Robertson conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Schubert's "Rosamunde" Overture, Beethoven's Violin Concerto (featuring Gil Shaham), Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll," and Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Haydn." . . . ¶ June 22 at 5:30: The St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble offers an all-Bach concert, comprising his Orchestral Suite No. 1, A-Minor Violin Concerto, and "Brandenburg" Concertos No. 4 and No. 5. . . . ¶ June 27 at 8: Soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, assisted at the piano by her husband, Kevin Murphy, performs a wide-ranging recital that includes works by Handel, Mahler, Fauré, Britten, and Copland. . . . ¶ June 28 at 7: A benefit concert of solos and duets from classic Broadway shows, featuring soprano Barbara Cook, bass James Morris, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Wally Harper conducts. . . . ¶ June 29 at 5:30: Violinist Robert McDuffie, violist Lawrence Dutton, cellist Carter Brey, and pianist Misha Dichter team up for a program of piano quartets by Mozart (in E-Flat Major), Dvořák (in E-Flat Major, Op. 87), and Brahms (in A Major). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Dance the Night Away—On Wednesday, June 25, at 8:15, dancing under the stars returns to Lincoln Center's Fountain Plaza. The annual Midsummer Night Swing festival, which includes evenings of swing, bossa nova, and tango (and dance lessons, starting each evening at 6:30), runs Tuesdays through Saturdays until July 26. For more information, call 875-5766.

Change Is in the Air—Saxophonist Paul Winter, uilleann-pipes master Davy Spillane, and vocalist Cathie Ryan mark the summer solstice with three concerts: June 20 at 7:30 P.M. and June 21—the longest day of the year—at 4 A.M. and 7:30 P.M. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133.)

Mermaid Parade—The friendly folks at Sideshows by the Seashore don tails and scales for the annual promenade down the Coney Island boardwalk. June 21 at 2. For more information, call 718-372-5159.

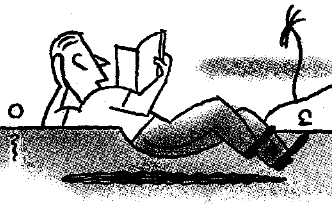
Talks—June 19 at 8: Rick Moody, Francine Prose, Luc Sante, and other writers consider Thomas Pynchon's latest novel, "Mason & Dixon." (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) . . . ¶ June 25 at 6: Novelist Erica Jong moderates a discussion on American immigration whose participants include poet Maya Angelou, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, and writer Gay Talese. (Angel Orensanz Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St. No tickets necessary.)

Readings—June 19 at 6:30: Charlene Hunter, Dennis Rees, Tim Farley, and a half-dozen additional actors declaim the poetry of James Merrill, Emily Dickinson, Tennessee Williams, and others. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ June 23 at 8: Jon Lee Anderson reads from his new biography, "Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., near 29th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 25 at 7: Gita Mehta reads from her new collection of essays about contemporary India, "Snakes and Ladders," and Gary Indiana and Lydia Davis read their fiction. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Tickets at the door.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Writing on the sand

ROBERT FROST memorably wrote: "The people along the sand / All turn and look one way." Actually, to judge from all the suggestions we've been getting for beach reading, they seldom look up from their books. We've never been convinced by the whole beach-reading thing (surely it's when you're reading someone like Judith Krantz that you need all your wits about you), but never mind. How about equal time for beach *writing*?



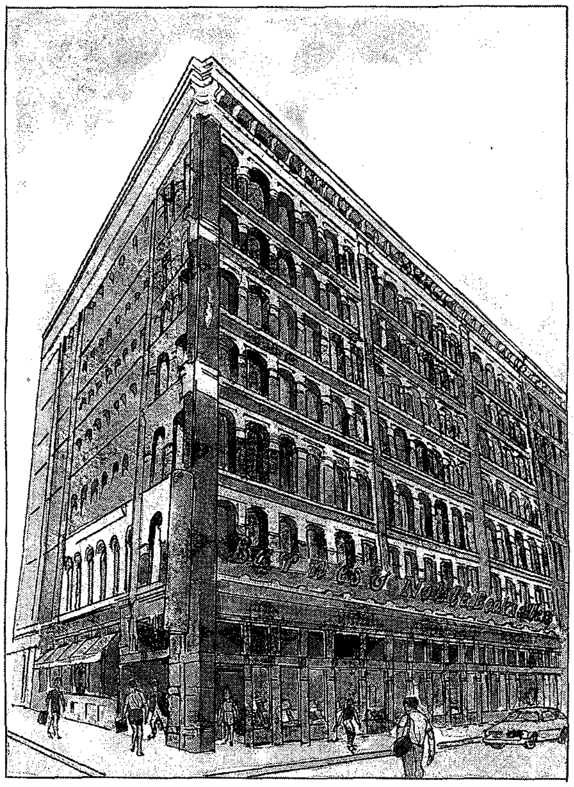
Sadly, the beach as a place of recreation has been somewhat scanted by Western literature. "You have to remember that beaches were once quite dangerous places," the poet James Fenton explains. "Beachcombers would come out and strip shipwreck victims of their valuables, and if they weren't yet dead, they'd *club* them to death. There's a memory of that in books like TREASURE ISLAND."

Connoisseurs of beach lit. are quick to point to settings such as the Riviera in TENDER IS THE NIGHT or the Lido in DEATH IN VENICE (whose author sensibly chose to spend his later years closer to Venice, California). Kato Kaelin, who made his film début in "Beach Fever" (1988), has himself found inspiration in narrative. "I go to the Santa Monica beach every two weeks just to reënact FROM HERE TO ETERNITY," he told us, "except I always end up lying with seaweed." But then the "Baywatch" era poses its own literary challenges. "The trouble is, you say 'white sand and palm trees' and everyone has exactly that same travel-brochure image," says Alex Garland, whose novel THE BEACH (Riverhead) is set in Southeast Asia.

That's not to slight those sex-and-sand sagas by the likes of Pat Booth (PALM BEACH) and Judith Michael (POSSESSIONS). Sexual frustration, by contrast, is the great theme of the novelist Trey Ellis (HOME REPAIRS)—appropriately enough, since he writes about Martha's Vineyard. He's now a California convert with high praise for Daniel Duane's surfing chronicle CAUGHT INSIDE (North Point).

In the best man-versus-nature tradition, the beach itself remains inhospitable to writing. "The only way I can write on the beach is with a ballpoint pen," says James Brady, whose latest name-dropping frolic, FURTHER LANE (St. Martin's), is set in East Hampton. "The fact is, you just can't read a laptop screen in full sunlight."

EVER MEULEN



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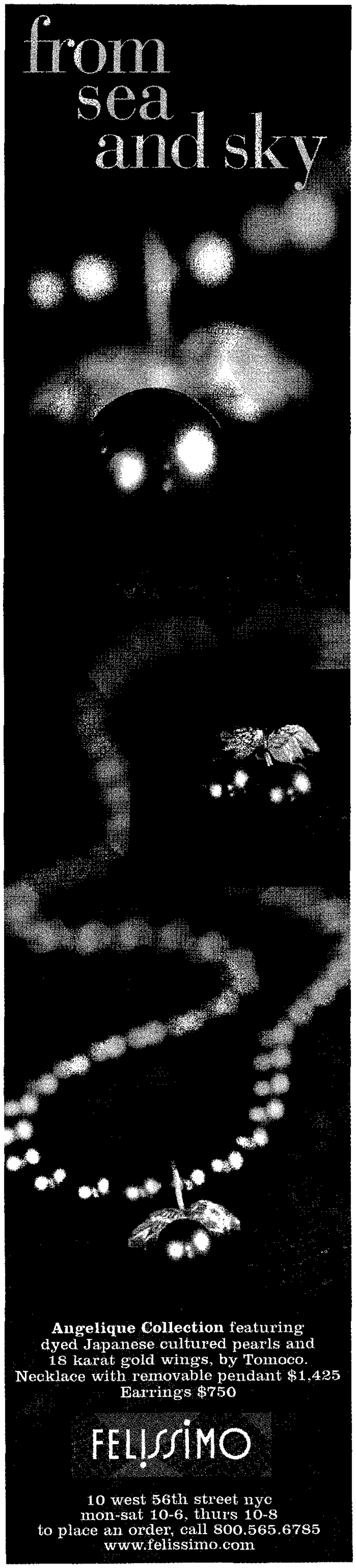

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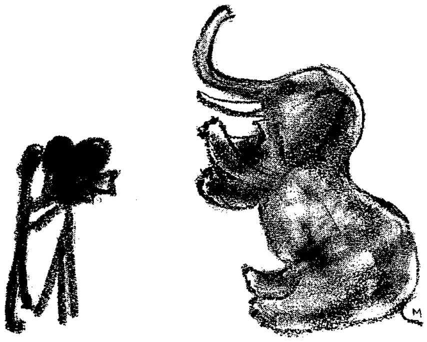


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING

Batman & Robin—Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman) battle Batman (George Clooney), Robin (Chris O'Donnell), and Batgirl (Alicia Silverstone) for control of Gotham City, in an adventure directed by Joel Schumacher. Opening June 20. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Dream with the Fishes—A black comedy written and directed by Finn Taylor, about an encounter between a suicidal young man (David Arquette) and a dying one (Brad Hunt). With Cathy Moriarty. Opening June 20. (Angelika Film Center.)

East Side Story—A documentary by Dana Ranga, on the history of movie musicals behind the Iron Curtain. In English, German, Russian, and Romanian. Opening June 25. (Film Forum.)

Face/Off—An F.B.I. agent (John Travolta) and a terrorist (Nicolas Cage) exchange identities, in John Woo's action thriller. Opening June 27.

Fall—Eric Schaeffer's drama centers on a romance between a New York City cabdriver (Schaeffer) and a married model (Amanda de Cadenet). Opening June 20. (Angelika Film Center.)

For Roseanne—A comedy detailing the lengths to which an Italian husband (Jean Reno) is willing to go to assure his dying wife (Mercedes Ruehl) the burial plot she wants. Directed by Paul Weiland. Opening June 18. (Eastside Playhouse.)

Gabbeh—Director Mohsen Makhmalbaf's latest drama, inspired by the intricate carpets of Iranian nomads. In Farsi. (June 23 at the Museum of Modern Art; opening June 25 at Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinemas.)

Head Above Water—Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz, Craig Sheffer, and Billy Zane star in a murder mystery directed by Jim Wilson. Opening June 25. (68th St. Playhouse.)

Innocent Sleep—A murder is made to look like a suicide in Scott Michell's conspiracy thriller. With Michael Gambon, Rupert Graves, Annabella Sciorra, Graham Crowden, John Hanna, and Franco Nero. Opening June 27. (Angelika Film Center and Quad Cinema.)

The Last Time I Committed Suicide—Writer-director Stephen Kay's drama about the Beat icon Neal Cassady (Thomas Jane) and two of his less famous friends (Claire Forlani and Keanu Reeves). Opening June 20. (Cinema Village.)

My Best Friend's Wedding—Reviewed below in Current Films. Opening June 20.

Shall We Dance?—A former professional dancer takes a middle-aged businessman as a student and rediscovers the pleasures of her art, in a film directed by Masayuki Suo. In Japanese. Opening June 27. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer—Shinya Tsukamoto's futuristic thriller pits a street gang against an evil businessman. In Japanese. Opening June 27. (Cinema Village.)

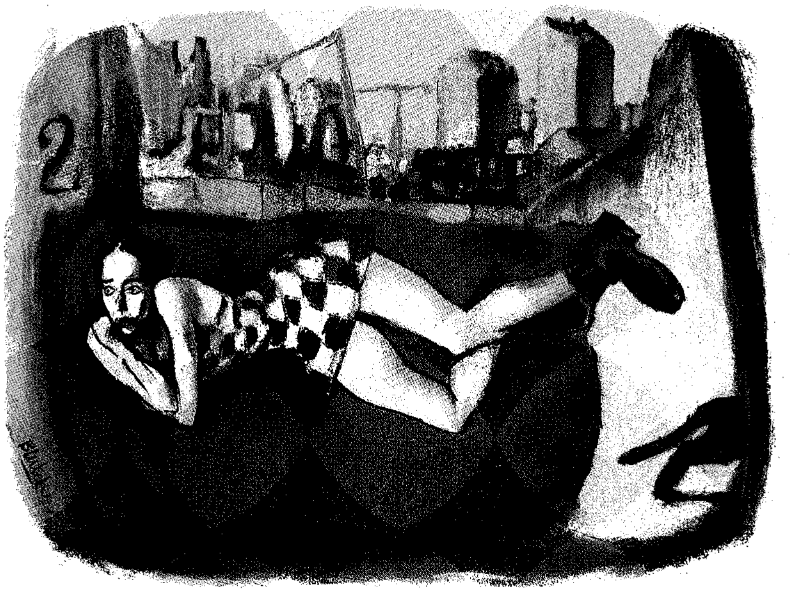
When the Cat's Away—An improvisational comedy, directed by Cédric Klapisch, about the search for a cat in Paris. In French. Opening June 20. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 40.)

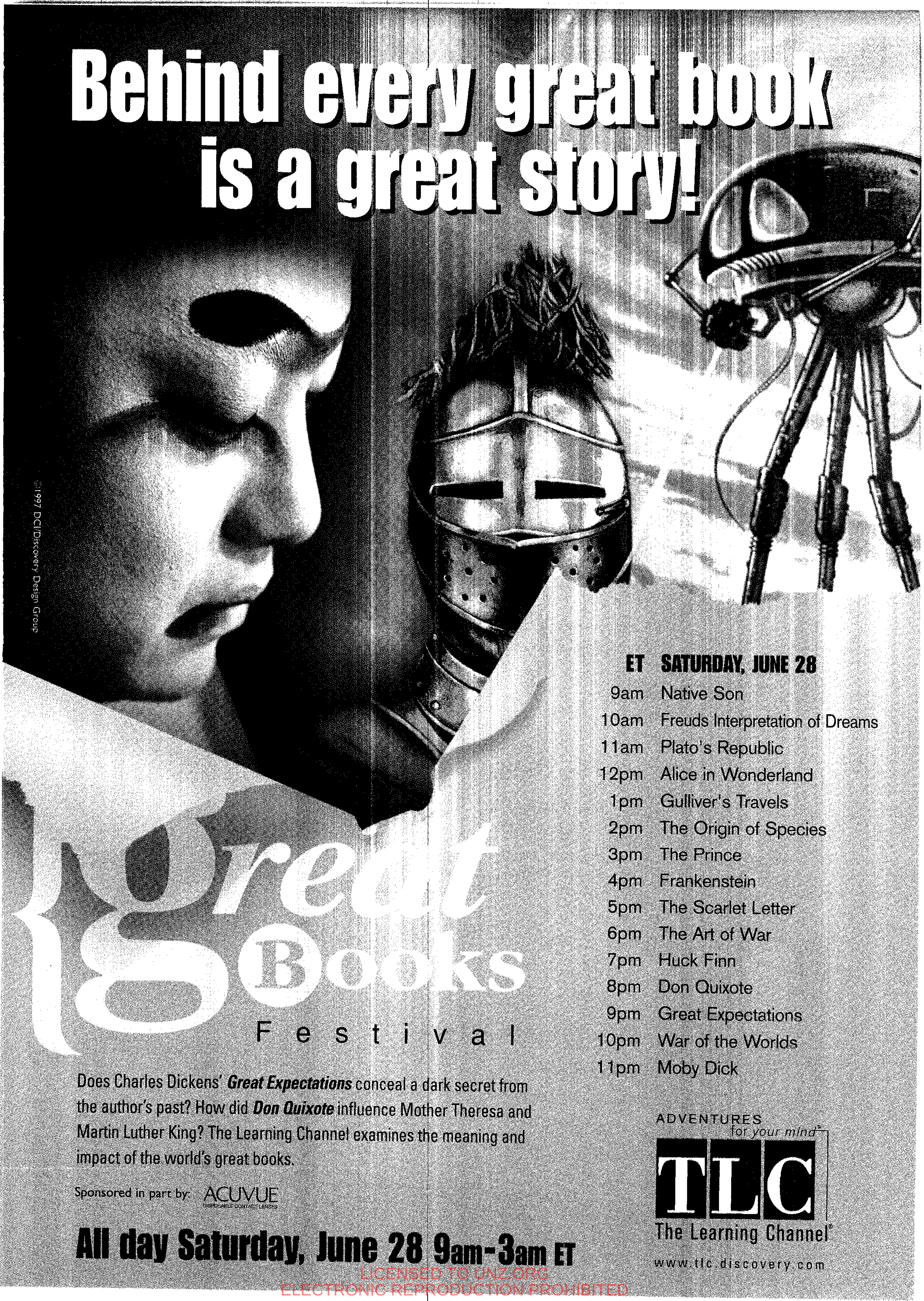
Addicted to Love—A desperately misbegotten screwball comedy. Matthew Broderick plays a dreamy astronomer who comes to New York to win back his girlfriend (Kelly Preston), who's moved in with a Frenchman (Tcheky Karyo); Meg Ryan plays the Frenchman's jilted fiancée, a tough New Yorker. Robert Gordon's creepy, contrived screenplay has Broderick and Ryan teaming up to stalk their exes, then falling in love with each other, but together the two stars plumb new lows in sexual chemistry. Directed by Griffin Dunne.—S.K. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery—A parody of James Bond films and the swinging London of the sixties. The jokes are hit and miss, but Mike Myers, who plays dual roles (he's the super-sleuth photographer of the title, who's awakened from a cryogenic sleep he



Opening June 20, Garance Clavel in "When the Cat's Away."

BLUTCH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10am	Freuds Interpretation of Dreams
11am	Plato's Republic
12pm	Alice in Wonderland
1pm	Gulliver's Travels
2pm	The Origin of Species
3pm	The Prince
4pm	Frankenstein
5pm	The Scarlet Letter
6pm	The Art of War
7pm	Huck Finn
8pm	Don Quixote
9pm	Great Expectations
10pm	War of the Worlds
11pm	Moby Dick

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entered in 1967, and he's also Dr. Evil) and has upped the ante by writing his own script, delivers every line with a gentle, toothy, hilarious abandon. And Elizabeth Hurley, as the spy who helps Powers make the transition to the nineties, has a fine, dry way of setting up Myers's better jokes. The director is Jay Roach.—B.D. (Lincoln Square, Manhattan Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

BRASSED OFF—Mark Herman's surprisingly enjoyable study of the effect of brass-band music on a depressed mining community in the North of England. Pete Postlethwaite stars as the bandleader, Danny. The miners' main reason to keep playing is the arrival of the bewitching Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald), who is actually working for the people who are planning to shut the pit down. The movie emerges, to Herman's great credit, not as stiff dialectic but as kindly, flexible farce. Also with Ewan McGregor.—A.L. (5/26/97) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and New York Twin.)

BREAKDOWN—A well-made if not particularly original highway thriller, starring Kurt Russell as a man whose wife (Kathleen Quinlan) vanishes while they're vacationing in the Southwest. The director, Jonathan Mostow, milks a lot of anxiety out of dusty desert roads and creepy diners, building a fine suspense machine as Russell, in an impressive performance, tracks a menacing trucker (J. T. Walsh) who may be responsible for his wife's disappearance.—B.D. (Astor Plaza, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Waverly.)

BUDDY—Rene Russo plays Trudy Lintz, a wealthy woman who earlier this century raised the title character, a gorilla, as if he were a human child. Directed by Caroline Thompson, who adapted the screenplay from Lintz's autobiography, "Animals Are My Hobby." Also with Robbie Coltrane and Alan Cumming. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION—This odd and fractured black comedy, a first feature from the Australian director Peter Duncan, is, you might say, too original for its own good. A devoted Australian Communist (Judy Davis, funny and fidgety) meets Joseph Stalin (a disastrously vulgar F. Murray Abraham), who in the course of an interesting evening woos her, impregnates her, and dies on her. Their child grows up to cultivate both a mustache and a set of implacable attitudes, which leave us in no doubt about his genetic inheritance. The film is a frenzy of newsreels, stills, slow motion, and mock interviews, although its best moments are, arguably, the quiet, shabby scenes of family life.—A.L. (5/12/97) (Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

CON AIR—The premise is juicy enough: a bunch of America's most unreconstructed convicts, who are being flown to a new high-security jail, commandeer the plane and make a bid for freedom. The producer is Jerry Bruckheimer, whose previous offering was "The Rock." The cast includes John Cusack as the good guy, John Malkovich as the bad guy, Nicolas Cage as the bad guy turned good, and Steve Buscemi as the bad guy turned extremely strange. And yet the result never really takes off. The stunts are a gas and the explosions bang your eardrums, but the basic formula is now so exposed in its thinness and so blatant in its borrowings that the excitement soon grows horribly routine. The director, Simon West, is so fond of hitting highs that he forgets to add any lows. Cage almost rescues the movie; for all his muscle-flexing, he maintains the droopy, amused look of a man who's seen it all before. You know how he feels.—A.L. (6/9/97) (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Guild, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

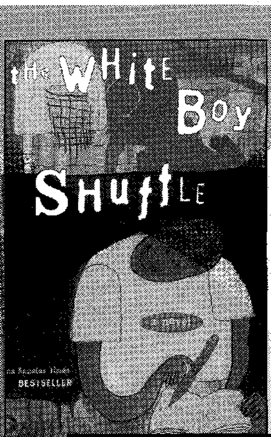
THE DAYTRIPPERS—A Long Island schoolteacher (Hope Davis) suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity, and confesses her fears to her parents (Anne Meara and Pat McNamara), her sister (Parker Posey), and her sister's boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). The whole group then piles into the car and heads for Manhattan, hoping to pick up the elusive husband's scent. This low-budget début feature by the writer and director Greg Mottola is no big deal, but it has a terrific ensemble, and Mottola's affection for the characters is obvious.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and The Screening Room.)

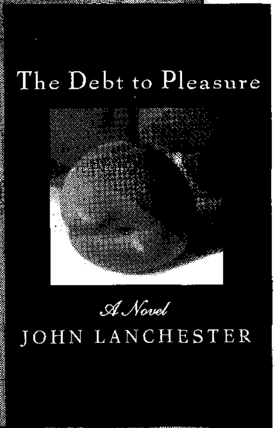
END OF SUMMER—A romantic drama set in late-eighteen-nineties Saratoga, directed by Linda Yellen. With Jacqueline Bisset and Peter Weller. (Angelika 57 and Quad Cinema.)

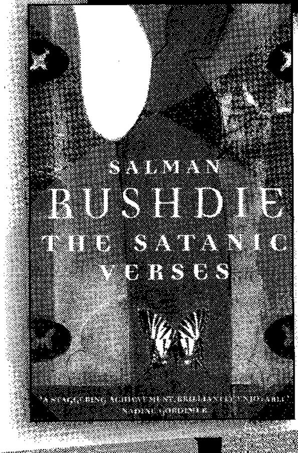
THE FIFTH ELEMENT—Loud, garish sci-fi extravaganza written and directed by Luc Besson. The production design is rich and imaginative, Jean-Paul Gaultier's costumes are truly fabulous, and Bruce Willis's performance, as a cabdriver out to save the world, is a small miracle of calm amidst a visual circus—all to no avail. Besson cranks the screaming and the mayhem to ear-splitting levels.—B.D. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

HERCULES—An early run for the Disney Studios' thirty-fifth animated film, a musical comedy directed by John Musker and Ron Clements, with music and lyrics by Alan Menken and David Zippel. With a stage show featuring Disney characters. Through June 26. (New Amsterdam Theatre, 214 W. 42nd St. For information, call 307-4100.) Opening officially June 27.

IRMA VEP—Olivier Assayas has a good time with the pretensions of French cinema in this mostly charming lampoon of filmmaking. The plot concerns a troubled director (Jean-Pierre Léaud) whose insistence on casting the Hong Kong superstar Maggie Cheung (playing herself) in his remake of the classic French silent "Les Vampires" brings him close to ruin. Assayas dramatizes life on a movie set with some nicely drawn minor characters. Echoes of French films run rampant; the cinematic tricks (handheld cameras, odd sound effects, and so forth) don't always work, but there's some fun to be had here. In French and English.—B.D. (Film Forum 3; through June 26.)







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The Lost World: Jurassic Park—Steven Spielberg's sequel to his 1993 blockbuster is, at its best, unmistakably the product of a master craftsman, and this time around he has found a way to amuse himself even as he cranks out a kind of movie that he has obviously outgrown. The director plays on our eagerness to be frightened by his mechanical beasts, and manipulates us so effortlessly that we begin to laugh at how primitive our responses are. With Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, and Pete Postlethwaite. Screenplay by David Koepp.—T.R. (6/2/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Ziegfeld.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—Equal-opportunity mawkishness. Joe Mantello's film version of the 1994 Terrence McNally play—he also directed it Off Broadway—hangs on to the Neil Simonesque structure of a group of gay men spending three summer weekends together at a country house. The group includes Stephen Spinella, John Benjamin Hickey, John Glover, Jason Alexander (as a stereotypical Broadway-loving queen), and Randy Becker (as a Latin hunk).—S.K. (Cinema II, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

My Best Friend's Wedding—In P. J. Hogan's romantic comedy, Julia Roberts gives a dazzling star performance, but the movie ultimately punishes her for the extraordinary force of her personality (and implicitly chastises the audience, too, for succumbing to it). Roberts's character learns that her former lover and current best friend (Dermot Mulroney) is engaged to be married; she suddenly realizes that she's in love with him and resolves to sabotage the nuptials by any means necessary. The screenplay, by Ronald Bass, sets up this classic screwball-comedy situation only to subvert it. For the first hour or so, Roberts's enthusiastic, sexy clowning energizes the picture, but then the filmmakers spoil our enjoyment of the heroine's deviousness: they allow dull good sense to triumph over their star's outsized appeal. What a letdown—you feel as if you'd been seduced and abandoned. Also with Cameron Diaz and Rupert Everett.—T.R. (6/16/97) (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas; starting June 20.)

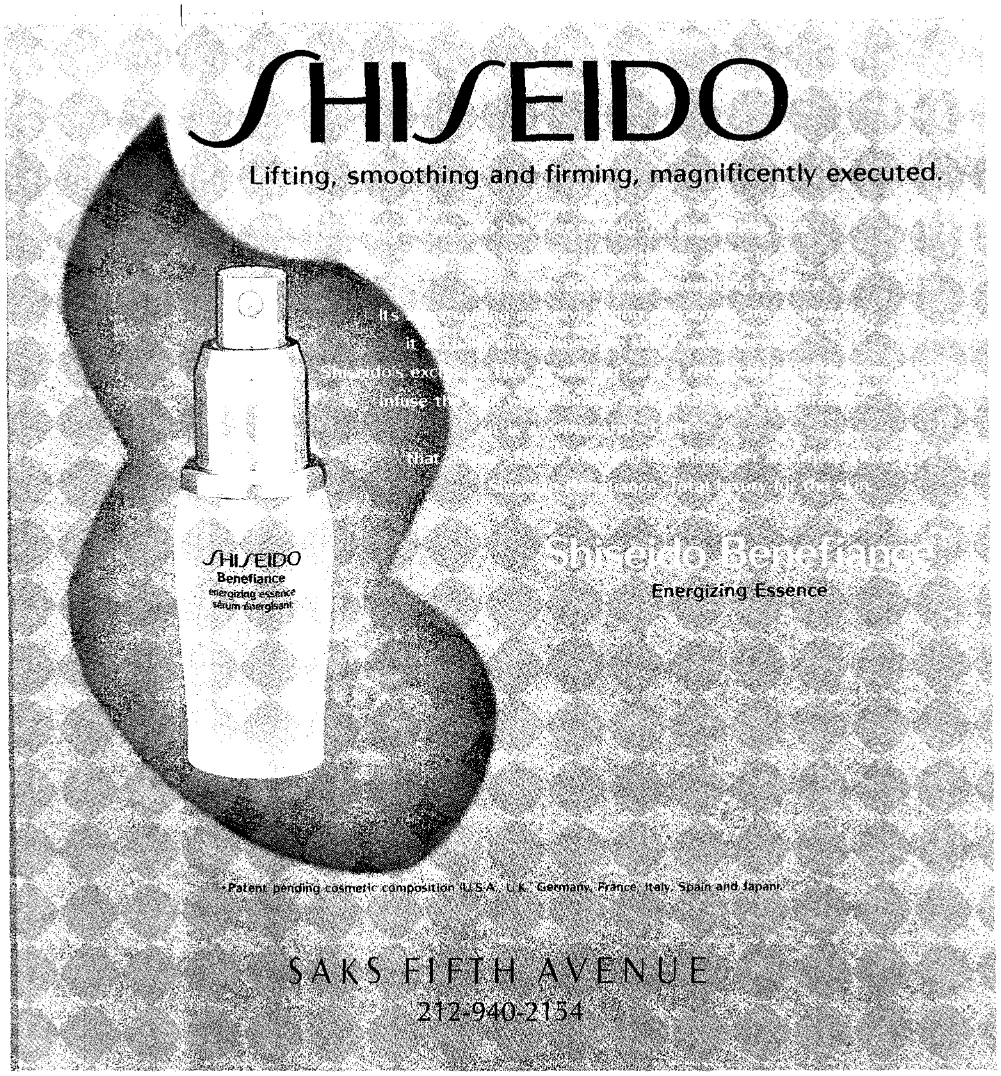
Night Falls on Manhattan—Yet another movie about New York City police corruption by Sidney Lumet. This one, starring Andy Garcia as a Manhattan D.A. prosecuting a drug king accused of shooting some cops, really belongs in a TV lineup. Lumet began his career, in the fifties, as a director of hard-hitting teleplays, and after years of Hollywood moviemaking he appears to have come full circle.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, State, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

La Promesse—Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's powerful coming-of-age story stars Jérémie Rénier as Igor, a streetwise Belgian teen-ager who helps his scummy father (Olivier Gourmet) traffic in illegal immigrants. When Igor sees one of his father's hapless African victims fall off a ladder, he promises to protect the dying man's wife and child; his struggle to uphold his pledge turns into a morality tale permeated with a Dickensian indignation at evil. A risk-taking, original piece of work. In French.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Speed 2: Cruise Control—Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, and Willem Dafoe are the stars of Jan De Bont's new thriller, about a hijacked cruise ship. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Squeeze—A fact-based film about three Boston teen-agers (Tyrone Burton, Eddie Cutanda, and Phuong Duong) caught between the pressures of the street and the demands of an anti-gang youth center. Written and directed by Robert Patton-Spruill. (State.)

Temptress Moon—A gigolo (Leslie Cheung) is ordered by his gangster boss to seduce an heiress (Gong Li) in the house where he was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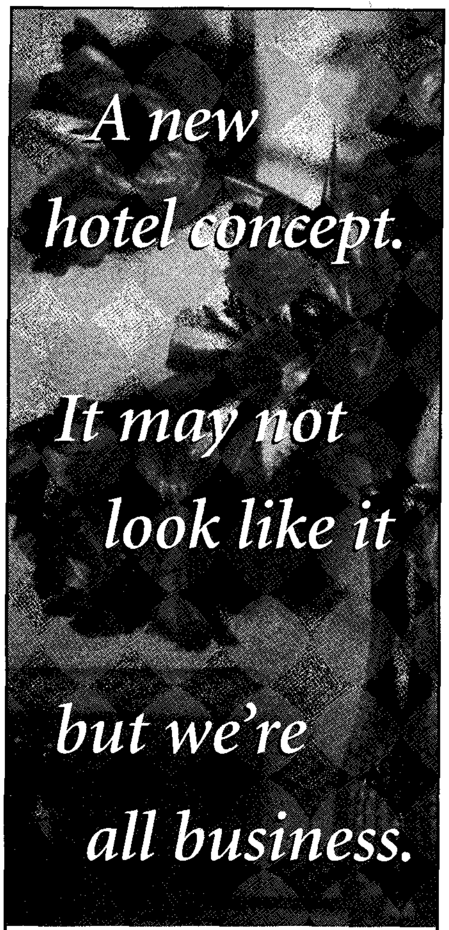

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once a servant. Directed by Chen Kaige. In Mandarin. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

'Til There Was You—Winnie Holzman's screenplay follows a pampered, romantic little girl and a neglected, tough little boy as they grow up through the sixties, seventies, and eighties into a chain-smoking ghostwriter (Jeanne Tripplehorn) and a self-serving architect (Dylan McDermott), respectively; each ends up working for an actress (Sarah Jessica Parker) who once starred in a chirpy "Brady Bunch"-like show. There are serious, ambitious ideas here about the haplessness and self-absorption of a generation raised on television. And Holzman, to her credit, doesn't just show us endlessly whining slackers—she comes up with a plot and with a logic for their problems. But the whole thing feels over-thematized, heavy with effort. What's worse, the two leads display not a single kernel of charm. Directed by Scott Winant.—S.K. (Beekman, Embassy 2, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Trial and Error—A straitlaced lawyer (Jeff Daniels) about to marry a rich shrew gets into a drunken brawl at his bachelor party and can't show up to defend a con man (Rip Torn) in court. So his best friend, a reckless out-of-work actor (Michael Richards, funniest when he least resembles Kramer, of "Seinfeld"), does it for him. The premise of an ignoramus performer's drawing on television clichés to construct a defense yields a few minutes of truly inspired sketch comedy—but these few wild bits are crushed by a predictable romantic subplot and some two-ton moralizing about what it means to tell the truth. Directed by Jonathan Lynn.—S.K. (Criterion Center, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Ulee's Gold—In Ulee (short for Ulysses) Jackson, a widowed beekeeper living in the Florida panhandle, Peter Fonda has a role that perfectly suits his rocklike demeanor and makes virtues of his expressive limitations. The movie, written and directed by Victor Nunez, is designed to draw this lonely, quietly embittered man out of his emotional hibernation and get his blood running again. Nunez's direction makes this process seem even slower than it has to, but the film's sluggish rhythm doesn't hurt Fonda's performance; for once, his very deliberate style feels appropriate. He looks at home in this lush, sun-dazed world, and his characteristic stillness is surprisingly resonant: there's pain in it, and fear, and an awful kind of resignation. Also with Patricia Richardson.—T.R. (6/16/97) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Regency.)

The Van—Adapted by Roddy Doyle from the third novel in his Barrytown Trilogy, this tale of Dublin no-hopers also marks the lonely and melancholic end of the trilogy in the movies. Colm Meaney stars as a paunchy idler who joins forces with a friend (Donal O'Kelly) to run a new kind of fast-food service: mobile, friendly, frantic, and profoundly unhealthy. Stephen Frears, who directed, works equally hard to serve up the energy and farce of their enterprise, but finally he is sapped by the plotless pathos of the tale.—A.L. (5/26/97) (Angelika Film Center and 62nd & Broadway.)

Wedding Bell Blues—A romantic comedy about three unmarried women (Paulina Porizkova, Illeana Douglas, and Julie Warner) who head for Las Vegas to find husbands before their impending thirtieth birthdays. Also with John Corbett, Charles Martin Smith, and Jonathan Penner. Directed by Dana Lustig. (68th Street Playhouse and Village Theatre VII.)

When We Were Kings—A foolproof documentary. Then again, it's hard to see how anyone could mess up the story of the 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman: the drama is all there, ripe for the telling, and the director, Leon Gast, grabs the opportunity with both hands. To maintain the suspense, he enlists help from a wide range of Ali fans: George Plimpton, Spike Lee, and, above all, Norman Mailer, who talks about that night with the unabated excitement of a child.—A.L. (2/17/97) (The Screening Room.)

ALSO PLAYING

ABSOLUTE POWER: Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CHASING AMY** (reviewed in our issue of 4/7/97): Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3rd Avenue. . . . **DONNIE BRASCO** (3/17/97): 64th and 2nd. . . . **DOUBLE TEAM:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DUST OF LIFE:** Film Forum. . . . **THE ENGLISH PATIENT** (11/25/96): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **FATHERS' DAY** (5/19/97): Lincoln Square and New York Twin. . . . **FEMALE PERVERSIONS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **FLAMENCO:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **GROSSE POINTE BLANK** (4/21/97): Village Theatre VII. . . . **INVENTING THE ABBOTTS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **JERRY MAGUIRE** (12/16/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **KAMA SUTRA:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **KOLYA:** 86th Street East Twin and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LIAR LIAR** (3/31/97): National Twin. . . . **LOVE JONES:** Criterion Center. . . . **MURDER AT 1600:** Criterion Center. . . . **THE PILLOW BOOK:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **PONETTE:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **THE SAINT** (4/14/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SCREAM:** Embassy 4. . . . **SLING BLADE:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **SPRUNG:** Criterion Center. . . . **THAT OLD FEELING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **VOLCANO:** National Twin.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, *Third Ave. at 86th St.*
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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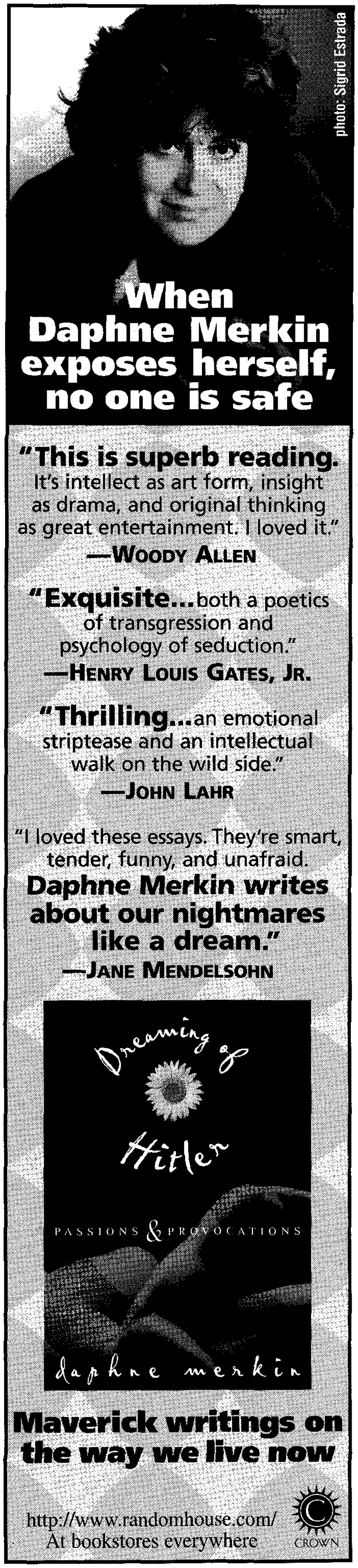
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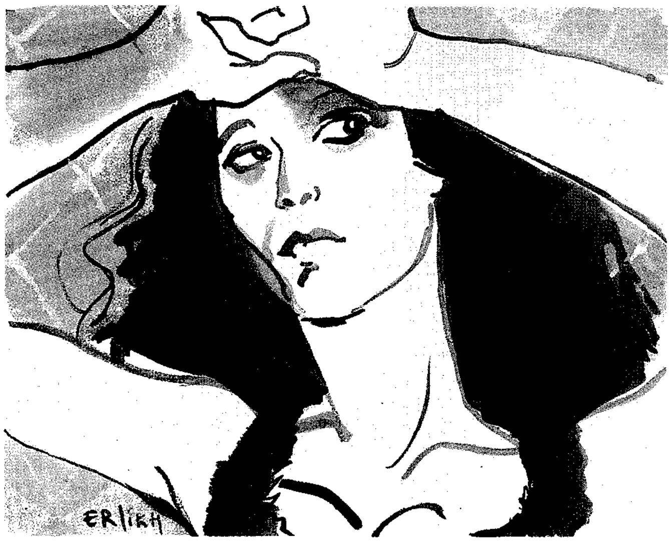
REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Anna Christie (1930)—One waits for an eternity for Garbo to show up and utter her first talking-picture line—"Give me a whiskey, ginger ale on the side. And don't be stingy, baby." This is not one of Eugene O'Neill's best plays, and dat-ole-davil-sea stuff is pretty hard to take in this version, directed by Clarence Brown. The cast includes Charles Bickford, Marie Dressler, and George F. Marion.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 30.)

Anne Frank Remembered (1995)—The British documentarian Jon Blair takes a bracingly exploratory approach to the story of the girl who, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, wrote the world's most famous diary. For five decades it has held readers with its details of the Secret Annex of rooms where eight people—the Franks, their friends the van Pelses, and Anne's bête noire, the disciplinarian dentist Fritz Pfeffer—led a tense, fractious existence from July, 1942, to August, 1944. By placing the story in its full historical context, Blair renews its power: after getting to know these people (through letters, witnesses, and so forth), we follow them into the camps, where everything we think of as character was tested and altered. And he elicits statements from his subjects that are startling and moving in their unself-consciousness. When Miep Gies, the Secret Annex's guardian angel, tells Fritz Pfeffer's son Peter that his father was her friend and her dentist—an "exceptionally good" dentist—Pfeffer says he needs only two words: "vielen Dank." That's just what moviegoers owe Blair.—M.S. (Morgan Library; June 28.)



At Film Forum 2, Dorothy Dandridge in "Tamango."

EDUARD ERLIKH

Blondie of the Follies (1932)—An unjustly forgotten film—a backstage story with an F. Scott Fitzgerald feeling to it. (It was written by Frances Marion and Anita Loos.) Marion Davies and Billie Dove are a marvellously contrasting pair of Follies girls, and Robert Montgomery is the male lead. Edmund Goulding directed.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 27.)

The Champ (1931)—Jackie Cooper was asked to carry this soggy load of heartbreaking melodrama on his all too valiant little shoulders. He plays the pathetic son of an alcoholic ex-prizefighter (Wallace Beery, who pulled out more than a few stops) in a tedious story devised by Frances Marion—something about Tijuana and horse racing and boxing. King Vidor directed.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 26.)

Father of the Bride (1950)—Deeply conventional, plushly middle-class view of normal romance and marriage, seen from the point of view of the banker father (Spencer Tracy) of the bride (Elizabeth Taylor, still in her teens). Vincente Minnelli directed very simply and skillfully, keeping us at a discreet distance; within its own terms the picture is sensitive and very well done, but it's also tiresomely fraudulent—an idealization of a safe, shuttered existence, the good life according to M-G-M, twenty-four-karat complacency.—P.K. (Bryant Park; June 23.)

Hard-Boiled (1993)—Hong Kong action specialist John Woo does a vivid cartoon version of the kinetics and the twisted-loyalty themes of Sam Peckinpah in this tale of duelling triads and lawmen, starring Chow Yun-fat. Woo works everything out strictly in terms of violent spectacle; his operatic excesses push it all into pitch-black comedy. In Cantonese.—M.S. (Brooklyn Museum of Art; June 28-29.)

The Man Who Envied Women (1985)—A Molotov cocktail of a movie: strident, provocative, infuriating, spontaneous, non-narrative, and over-intellectualized. Yvonne Rainer's embattled artist-heroine, who perseveres through divorce, eviction, and the death of her gynecologist on KAL flight 007, is heard but not seen; her husband, played by two different actors, is seen and heard incessantly, often babbling to the camera as if he were the analysand and we the shrinks. Instead of turning their breakup into a plot, Rainer uses it as a hook on which to pin audiovisual collages, utilizing everything from periodical clippings to Golden Age of Hollywood film clips. She relies on denatured theoretical language even while criticizing it, and, as the title character and a female friend spout Foucault and one of his feminist commentators ad nauseam, you may feel like screaming and fleeing.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; June 22 and June 25-26.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**Theatre 2:** Through June 19: "M" (1932, Fritz Lang; in German), with Peter Lorre. . . . ¶ A two-week program of Dorothy Dandridge films. June 20-23: "Carmen Jones" (1954, Otto Preminger). . . . June 24-25: "The Decks Ran Red" (1958, Andrew L. Stone) and "Bright Road" (1953, Gerald Mayer). . . . June 26-28: "Tamango" (1957, John Berry). . . . June 29-30: "Island in the Sun" (1957, Robert Rossen) and "Malaga" (1960, Laslo Benedek). . . . July 1: "The Harlem Globetrotters" (1951, Phil Brown) and a group of short musical films. . . . **Theatre 3:** From June 27: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films directed by the Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, most in Farsi, with English subtitles. June 19 at 2:30: "Time of Love" (1990; in Turkish). . . . June 19 at 6: "Marriage of the Blessed" (1989). . . . June 19 at 8: "A Moment of Innocence" (1996). . . . June 20 at 2:30 and June 22 at 5: "The Actor" (1993). . . . June 20 at 6: "Fleeing from Evil to God" (1984). . . . June 20 at 8: "Once Upon a Time, Cinema" (1992). . . . June 21-22 at noon: "Cinema Cinema" (1994-96)....June 21 at 2 and June 23 at 3: "Boycott" (1985)....June 21 at 5: "Close-Up" (1989)....June 22 at 2: "Salaam Cinema" (1995)....June 23 at 6: "Gabbeh" (1996).... ¶ June 19 at 6, June 20 at 3 and 6, and June 21-22 at 2:30 and 5: A program of videos produced at Downtown Community Television.... ¶ A program of films written by Frances Marion. June 23 at 2:30 and July 1 at 6: "Humoresque" (1920, Frank Borzage; silent) and "A Girl's Folly" (1917, Maurice Tourneur; silent)....June 23 at 6: "The Big House" (1930, George W. Hill)....June 24 at 2:30: "Zander the Great" (1925, Hill; silent)....June 24 at 6: "The Wind" (1928, Victor Seastrom; silent).... June 26 at 2:30: "Emma" (1932, Clarence Brown)....June 26 at 6: "The Champ" (†).... June 26 at 8: "Secrets" (1933, Borzage).... June 27 at 2:30: "Going Hollywood" (1933, Raoul Walsh)....June 27 at 6: "Blondie of the Follies" (†)....June 27 at 8: "Dinner at Eight" (1933, George Cukor)....June 28 at 2: "Love" (1927, Edmund Goulding; silent)....June 28 at 5: "The Secret Six" (1931, Hill)....June 29 at 2: "Let Us Be Gay" (1930, Robert Z. Leonard)....June 29 at 5: "Min and Bill" (1930, Hill)....June 30 at 2:30: "Stella Dallas" (1925, Henry King; silent)....June 30 at 6: "Anna Christie" (†)....July 1 at 2:30: "The Scarlet Letter" (1926, Seastrom; silent).... ¶ June 24 at 3: "Looking for Richard" (1996, Al Pacino).... ¶ June 26 at 3 and 6: A program of international short films.... ¶ June 27 at 3: "As You Like It" (1936, Paul Czinner).... ¶ A series of films made between 1918 and 1949 with all African-American casts. June 27 at 6: "Two Gun Man from Harlem" (1938, Richard C. Kahn) and "Beware" (1946, Bud Pollard)....June 27 at 8:15: "Within Our Gates" (1920, Oscar Micheaux; silent)....June 28 at 2: "Double Deal" (1939, Arthur Dreifuss) and "Souls of Sin" (1949, Powell Lindsay)....June 28 at 5: "Broken Strings" (1940, Bernard B. Ray) and "Moon Over Harlem" (1939, Edgar G. Ulmer)....June 29 at 2: "Underworld" (1937, Micheaux) and "Dark Manhattan" (1937, Harry Fraser)....June 29 at 5: "Miracle in Harlem" (1948, Jack Kemp)....June 30 at 3: "Boy! What a Girl!" (1945, Arthur Leonard)....June 30 at 6: "Blood of Jesus" (1941, Spencer Williams) and "Dirty Gertie from Harlem" (1946, Williams)....July 1 at 3: "The Scar of Shame" (1926, Frank Peregini; silent) and "Eleven P.M." (1928, Richard D. Maurice; silent)....July 1 at 6: "Sepia Cinderella" (1947, Leonard) and "Hi-De-Ho" (1947, Josh Binney).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through June 19: The 1997 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival.... ¶ A program of films directed by Yvonne Rainer. June 20 at 2 and 6:15, June 21 at 8:30, June 22 at 4, June 23 at 6:15, June 25 at 8:30, and June 26 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Murder and Murder" (1996)....June 20 at 4, June 21 at 6:15, and June 23 at 2: "Privilege" (1990).... June 20 at 9, June 22 at 2, and June 23 at 4: "Film About a Woman Who . . ." (1974).... June 21 at 4 and June 23 at 8:45: "Journeys from Berlin/1971" (1980)....June 22 at 6:30 and June 25 at 2: "Kristina Talking Pictures" (1976)....June 22 at 8:30, June 25 at 6, and June 26 at 2: "The Man Who Envied Women" (†)....June 25 at 4 and June 26 at 6:30: "Lives of Performers" (1972).... ¶ June 27 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10; June 28 at 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, and 10:30; June 29 at 4:30, 6:30, and 8:30; June 30 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10; and July 1 at 2 and 4: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).... ¶ June 28-29 at 2: "Victor/Victoria" (1982, Blake Edwards).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—June 24 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Tango, the Exile of Gardel" (1985, Fernando Solanas; in French and Spanish)....July 1 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Caroline Chérie" (1950, Richard Pottier; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of silent films with their original recorded orchestral scores. June 21 at 2: "A Woman of Affairs" (1929, Clarence Brown)....June 21 at 4: "The Godless Girl" (1928, Cecil B. De Mille)....June 22 at 2: "The Wedding March" (1928, Erich von Stroheim)....June 22 at 4:15: "Queen Kelly" (1928-33, von Stroheim)....June 28 at 2: "Four Sons" (1928, John Ford)....June 28 at 4: "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1928, Harry Pollard)....June 29 at 2: "7th Heaven" (1927, Frank Borzage).... June 29 at 4:30: "Street Angel" (1928, Borzage).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On June 29 at 7, the feature will be "The Sound of Music" (1965, Robert Wise).

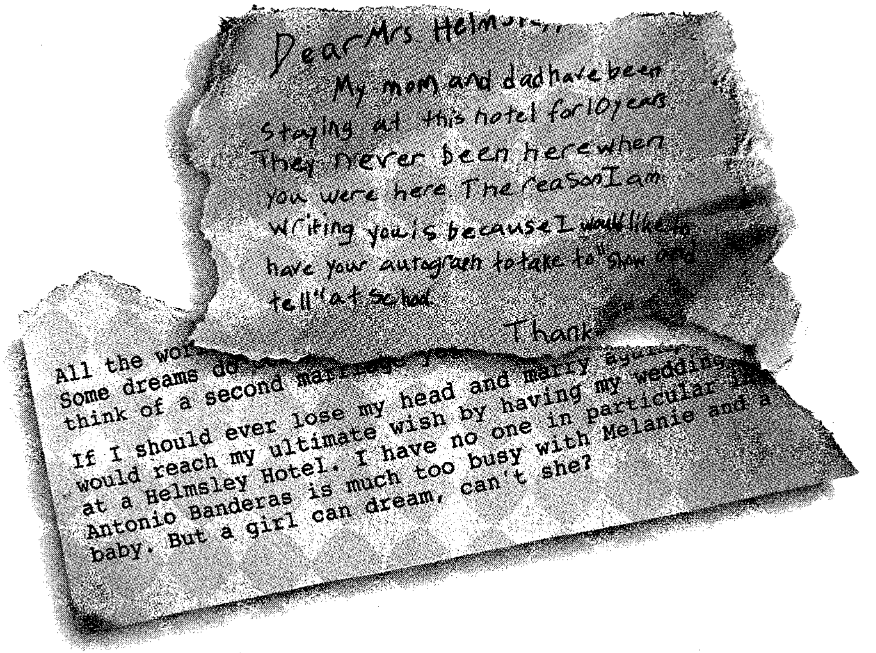
Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—June 19 at 7: "Foreign Land" (1995, Walter Salles; in Portuguese).... June 19 at 9:30: "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame" (1996, Srdjan Dragojevic; in Serbian).... June 20-30 at 2:30 and 8:45: "Underground" (1995, Emir Kusturica; in Serbian)....June 20-23 and June 25-30 at 5:45 and 7:15: "Frank and Ollie" (1995, Theodore Thomas).... June 20 at 7:30 and June 21-22 at 7: "La Roue" (1922, Abel Gance; silent).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes and coming attractions. The feature on June 23 will be "Father of the Bride" (†); on June 30, "Sorry, Wrong Number" (1948, Anatole Litvak). (Rain dates are the following nights.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of action films made in Hong Kong. June 21 at 3 and 7 and June 22 at 3: "A Better Tomorrow" (1986, John Woo; in Cantonese)....June 28 at 3 and 7 and June 29 at 3: "Hard-Boiled" (†).

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008, ext. 347)—A program of films inspired by actual and fictional memoirs. June 21 at 1: "Diary of a Lost Girl" (1929, G. W. Pabst)....June 21 at 3: "I Remember Mama" (1948, George Stevens)....June 28 at 1: "Anne Frank Remembered" (†)....June 28 at 3:15: "The Diary of Anne Frank" (1959, Stevens).

WHEN IT COMES TO YOU-KNOW-WHO, PEOPLE WILL TALK. THEY'LL ALSO WRITE.



Dear Mrs Helm
My mom and dad have been
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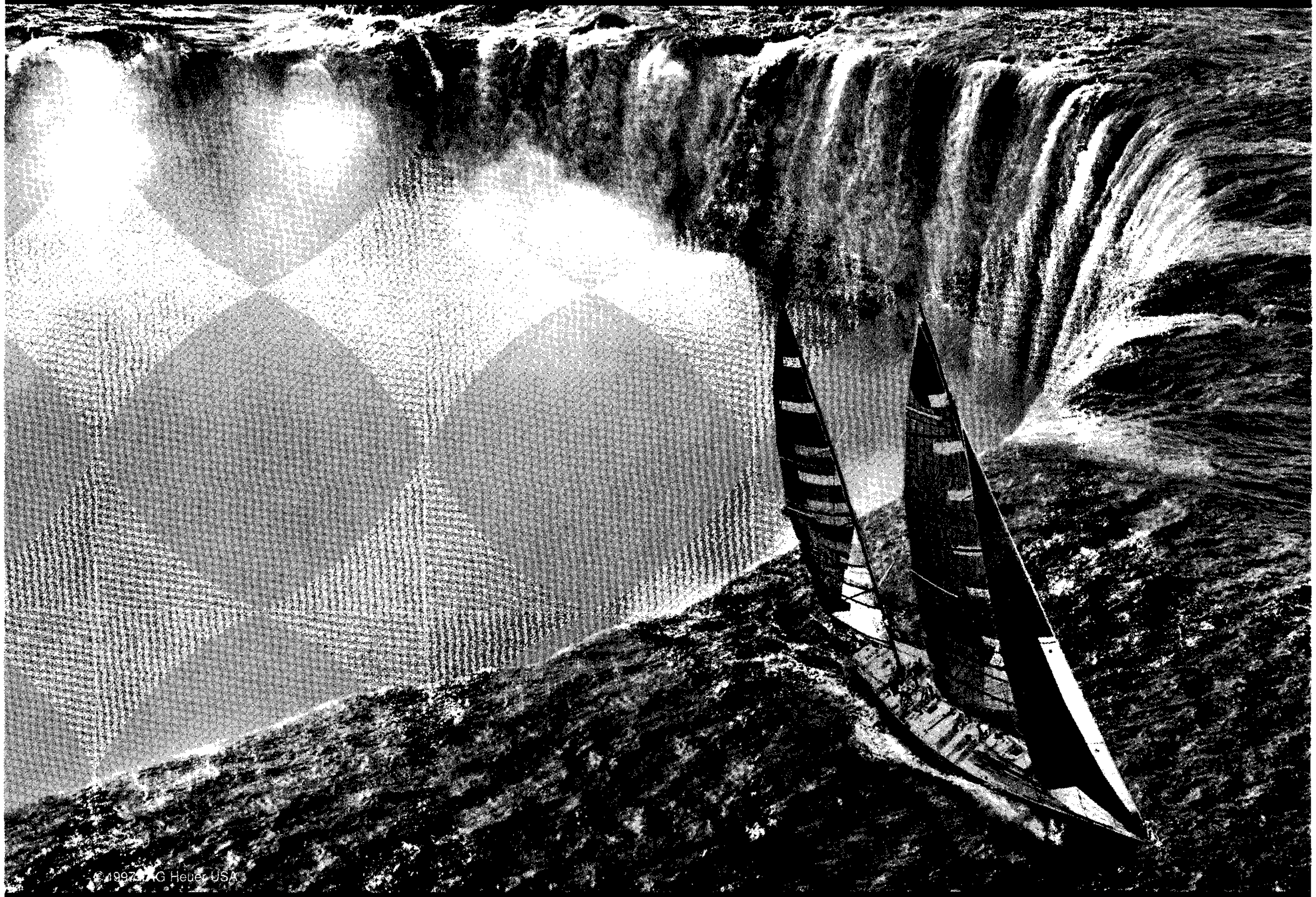

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

INK

Sex! Bribes! Indira Gandhi! India awaits its own "Primary Colors."

INDIA has long been viewed as one of the world's great experiments in democracy. Indians themselves, however, generally consider their politicians a pack of unprincipled rogues who conceal their treachery behind a screen of vapid Gandhian rhetoric. And the cynics are about to enjoy a delectable vindication, when, this fall, Penguin Books India publishes "The Insider," a transparently autobiographical novel by the seventy-five-year-old former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. "It would be as if Bill Clinton wrote 'Primary Colors,' " David Davidar, the book's editor and publisher, gloats. "It's probably going to be the most talked-about book that has come out of India since Independence." Davidar won't disclose any juicy revelations, though he is happy to note that "The Insider" will be full of "sex and corruption"—the twin mainstays of the political exposé.

Rao, having served under eight Prime Ministers, including Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv, is well positioned to tear off whatever bits of drapery still cling to India's political class. In recent years, the country has been beset by a string of payoff scandals reaching up to the Prime Minister's office, and "The Insider" is likely to be littered with clues about these goings on. Indeed, Rao himself has been in and out of the courts in the last few years, dodging allegations that he accepted nearly a million dollars from businessmen and used part of the money to buy off legislators (he denies any wrongdoing). The book also dwells on the Machiavellian calculations of day-to-day officeholding. One chapter describes lawmakers shifting their loyalties almost by the hour as a Prime Minister—obviously Mrs. Gandhi—decides which members of the Cabinet to sack.

It's unlikely that any insider details Rao provides will shock his readers as much as the fact that he wrote such a book in the first place. During his time in office, from 1991 to 1996, Rao came to be considered the dullest figure ever to guide the country's fortunes. His previous body of published work consists of translations from his native Telugu. But it turns out that Rao has been pounding away at his steamy novel in secret for fifteen years. And the private Rao is apparently a very different man from the public one. In October of 1995, an Indian magazine called *Outlook* provoked a gleeful uproar when it published an excerpt from the work. The passage had a little bit of politics and a lot of sex, some of it bodice-ripping and some oddly cerebral. "Their bodies, like strangers meeting for the first time, introduced themselves to each other," the P.M. wrote. "It was a process in which millions of pores, blood vessels and reflexes were involved in an all-out mutual comprehension."

It was this kind of passage that persuaded Davidar to give Rao what the publisher describes as one of the largest advances in Indian history—something on the order of a hundred thousand rupees, or twenty-eight hundred dollars at current exchange rates. But Davidar wishes it to be known that sex scenes will constitute "a very, very tiny portion" of the finished book. The publisher emphasizes that he considers "The Insider" a serious work by a scholarly man. He says he is sure that all the sex and corruption will be taken "out of context." Indeed, he's counting on it. —James Traub

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

RAG TRADE

The true tale of one man's quest to look as chic as Sonny Mehta.

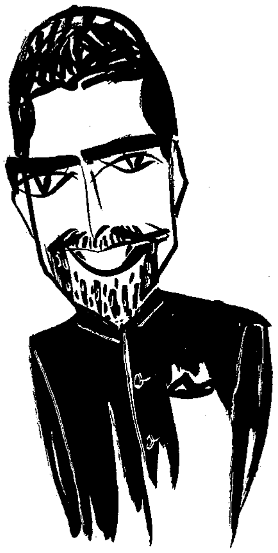
IF you live in New York, or China, India may seem a long way to go to buy a jacket. Permit me to explain.

I have always wanted to look like Sonny Mehta. It's his splendid jacket that I coveted. I've always wished I could cut a dash at a black-tie event, such as the National Book Awards, in a black Nehru jacket, like the one worn by the president of Knopf.

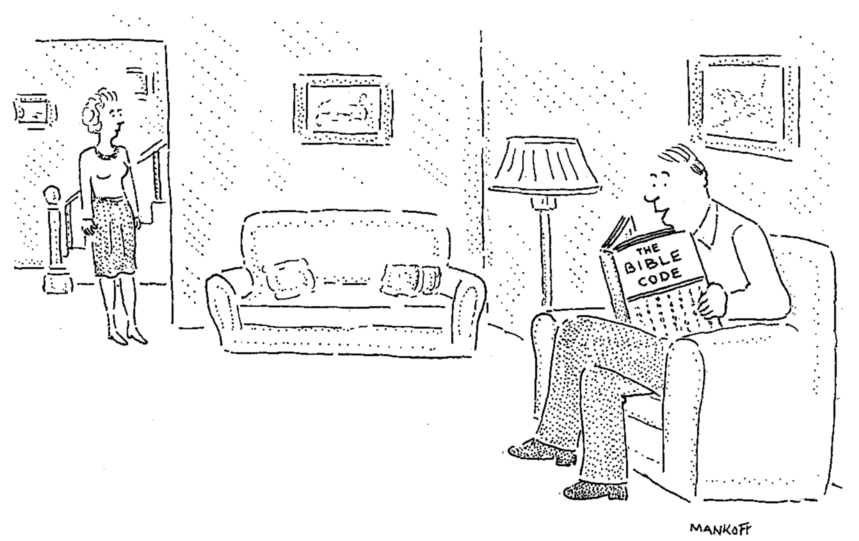
The Nehru jacket, which is buttoned to the neck, was popularized by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, and by the Beatles in their maharishi period. The Nehru is also sometimes known as the Jodhpuri, because, I assume, it was once all the rage in Jodhpur, where, I assume, jodhpurs were invented. To my mind, the chic, ascetic Nehru is a perfect substitute for the boring, conformist tuxedo, which was brought to America from Europe in 1886, when Griswold Lorillard first wore a black tie at the Tuxedo Club. But let's not go into that now.

I was convinced that if I could find a Nehru jacket like Mr. Mehta's my life would change. I have stubbornly never owned a tuxedo. At the same time, one never looks like a million dollars in a rent-a-tux. I've made do valiantly for years with an extremely tight-fitting black lounge suit. But something had to give. People notice.

When my oldest friend from Oxford days, the princely J. P. Singh, invited me to his



Sonny Mehta



"Hey, guess what we're having for dinner tomorrow!"

son's wedding in Jaipur recently, I didn't hesitate: it would be a wonderful opportunity to buy a genuine Nehru jacket. I was wrong. I couldn't find one anywhere. Indians like to give good news. "I know just the place, sir!" I would be told cheerfully in the marketplace. "Two minutes away, no more!" If you wish to explore the dodgy back streets of an Indian city, ask for a place that sells a Nehru jacket. "What can we do?" a merchant regretted. "They've gone out of fashion!"

Maybe so. But at the wedding the men were preening like peacocks in their Nehrus. Some wore diamond studs. Others wore strings of pearls. How glorious they looked!

There wasn't time to have a jacket made in Jaipur, or on the road as I travelled through Rajasthan, my driver playing a suicidal game of chicken, as is the Indian custom. Sign in Hindi on the back of a truck: "Everyone Has Their Own Destiny." True! And mine seemed not to be able to find a Nehru jacket in the whole of India.

After three weeks, my last chance was to have one made in New Delhi. I would be there for just two days before returning home. "All will be well, sir!" the Delhi tailor reassured me. "Come tomorrow for a fitting at noon. If not, at five!"

Out of Indian chaos comes more chaos. I would be leaving for the airport at seven. So the big day was tense, and, upon request, I had paid in advance. At the noon fitting, an arm was missing. "No problem! Return at five!" said the tailor, whom I liked enormously. "You are ready to kill me, but we must avoid my death at all costs!"

When I tried on the jacket again, later that day, we both sighed with relief. My Nehru jacket was perfect. "And now you look just like a maharaja!" the tailor said, laughing happily.

"Do you think so?" I asked.

"Without doubt! A maharaja!"

That beats even the president of Knopf.

—John Heilpern

THE PICTURES

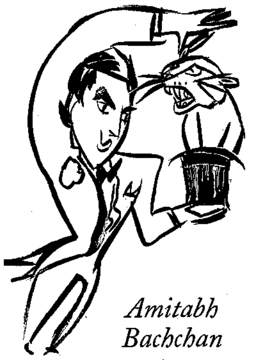
With the Islanders away, Bollywood invades the Nassau Coliseum.

On a normal Saturday night, the security detail at the Nassau Coliseum has the arduous task of keeping thousands of heavy-metal enthusiasts in line. Or the famously aggressive fans of the New York Islanders. But at the recent performance of "Megastars—Live in Concert" these hefty men, many of them moonlighting Irish and African-American cops, stood around looking bemused and a little inconsequential as some seventeen thousand Indians of all ages applauded the giants of the subcontinent's cinema.

"Megastars" features, for the first time on one stage, five of the biggest stars in the Hindi movie industry: Amitabh Bachchan, Manisha Koirala, the brothers Sanjay and Anil Kapoor, and the nation's newest sex symbol, Shilpa Shetty. They are here to dance, to lip-synch to movie songs, and to horse around with the comedian Johnny Lever. As Amitabh Bachchan points out, "It is a mix like Indian movies—spicy and different."

Tonight, at the coliseum, the loudest shrieks are for Bachchan. A cross between John Wayne and Frank Sinatra, he is handsome in a rugged, broken-nosed way, although his hair is an unnaturally deep black. "He's just a god!" a young female fan says.

India produces about eight hundred movies a year, and most are musicals, love stories, and melodramas all at the same time. Each has a compulsory wet-sari scene, some slapstick comedy, and several gun battles or fistfights. The acting is hammy by Western standards. The dancing is a hybrid of Hindu temple dance, folk dance, and moves copied from Michael Jackson. It is also hugely suggestive, with much pelvic thrusting by both sexes. At "Megastars—Live in Concert," dancers accompany each of the five superstars in elaborately choreographed production numbers from their best-known films. With the prerecorded music and vocals, these spectacles resemble nothing so much as the song-and-dance bits on the Academy Awards broadcast. In each routine, the dancers wear a different costume, but most feature sequins and exposed midriffs. In one, the girls are dressed as nurses and the boys as doctors, while Anil Kapoor appears wrapped entirely in bandages, which the dancers then unravel. In another they wear orange mechanics' coveralls.



Amitabh Bachchan

When you see them in the flesh, you realize that Indian movie stars are heavier than our own. They are wearing the five pounds that the camera adds to our skinny actors. The Bollywood moviegoing public just prefers them that way. Fans also seem to like men with bushy nineteen-seventies-style haircuts who won't leave coy women alone. A typical stage bit: the star approaches a dancing girl and starts thrusting his hips in her direction; she pushes him away, he grabs her; she pulls away, then turns and thrusts her pelvis at him, then runs away. The crowd loves it.

Between numbers, Bachchan comes out onstage alone to declaim, in Hindi, speeches from his movies, and it is clear that the audience knows them all by heart. Many of the speeches are overflowing with anger—Bachchan usually plays poor, op-

STRAIGHT MAN

From the bestselling author of *Nobody's Fool*—
"a gloriously funny"* novel of a wise guy
learning how to play it straight

STRAIGHT MAN

Attacked by a feminist poet, bitten by a goose, driven off the road by a jealous colleague— looks like wise guy Hank Devereaux has a new role in life.

Richard Russo

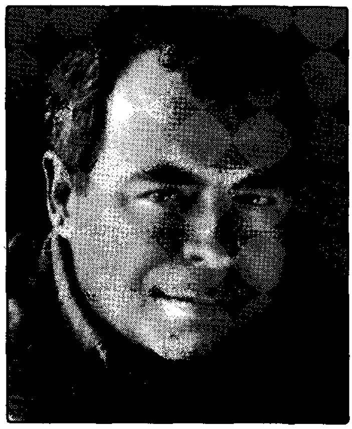
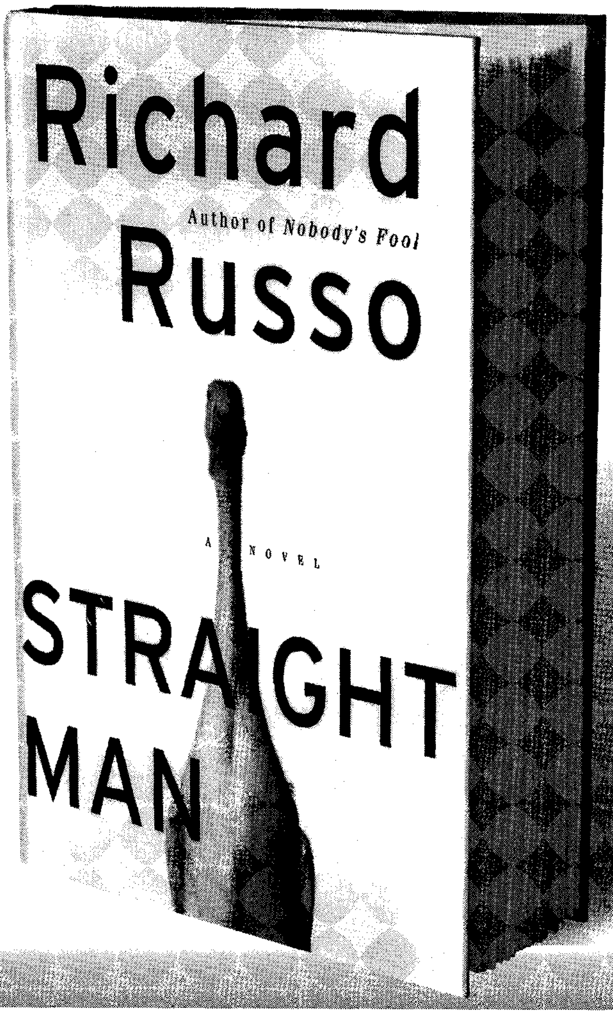


Photo: © Marion Ettlinger

"Seduces and charms... it's the perfect vehicle for another of Russo's irresistible revelations of the agreeable craziness of everyday life."

—**Kirkus Reviews* (starred)



"Russo is a master craftsman."

—*The Boston Globe*

"Hilarious, wise and compassionate. Readers who do not laugh uncontrollably during this raucous, witty and touching work are seriously impaired."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred)

"His natural grace as a storyteller is matched by his compassion for his characters."

—John Irving

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pressed, but extremely macho men who take terrible vengeance on someone who has wronged them. (His popularity with poor urban Indian men helped him win election to Parliament in 1984.) Then, unlike the other Megastars, he actually has a go at singing. After reciting some Urdu poetry, he finishes the four-hour concert with a set of magic tricks, and makes a live puma appear in an empty cage.

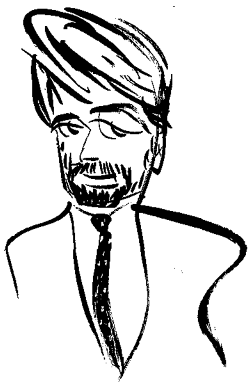
"We don't actually have concerts like this at home," Bachchan says later, in his courtly British English. "People have the original musicals instead." But there are those who find the whole film-stage-show genre rather embarrassing. Upper-crust Indians despise it in the way Western highbrows despise Las Vegas kitsch. Only last week, at the Asia Society, the New Delhi fashion designer Rohit Bal said, "Indian movies are a completely warped, disgusting, vulgar part of the Indian sensibility." But any foreigner watching the Megastars is struck by how well Indian popular culture has resisted American influence at a time when almost everywhere else in Asia Hollywood movies have won huge audiences. Similar concerts sell out at the Nassau Coliseum several times a year. The fans never cause any problems. And, unlike Islanders fans, they never go home disappointed.

—JONATHAN FOREMAN

SOCIAL NOTES FROM ALL OVER

Tunku Varadarajan's survival kit: laptop and black tie.

"AT the *Times*, we used to have a rule," Tunku Varadarajan says as he prepares to depart the St. Regis Hotel's King Cole Bar and hurry off to a dinner engagement. "Always dress as if you might have to go to a funeral or interview a Cabinet minister." In the month that Varadarajan has been the *Times* of London's New York bureau chief, the dress code has served him well. Since he arrived in town, his phone has not stopped ringing. It is a predicament that is not unusual for a journalist, but it has been complicated in the thirty-four-year-old Varadarajan's case by his sudden status as one of the city's most in-demand bachelors. How often is he invited out? "Every day, I fear. A lot of these calls I take completely blind," he says, sipping a Scotch-and-soda. "If the person's voice sounds nice, I tend to say yes. I suppose this could get me into a lot of trouble." During a recent dinner party that he attended with the painter Caio Fonseca, trouble emerged in the form of a "clever and helpful" stranger seated next to him, whom he talked to at length before asking, "Are you a schoolteacher?" "No," she answered, demurely. "I am a playwright." She turned out to be Wendy Wasserstein. "We have since had coffee together," Varadarajan says. "It has been the highlight of my stay so far."



Tunku Varadarajan

Varadarajan grew up in New Delhi, Lucknow, and, briefly, New York, where his father, a highly placed civil servant, labored to convince American businessmen (notably Marvin Traub, of Bloomingdale's) of the unique appeal of Indian textiles. After attending Trinity College, Oxford, Varadarajan stayed on to teach law there for six years. In 1993, he shocked his friends by taking a summer-trainee job in the *Times*' editorial department. Three years later, the paper posted him to Madrid, and a year after that he was sent to New York. However late he may be out at night, he's in his office at six-thirty every morning in a race to meet his London deadline by 2 P.M. His stamina shows no signs of flagging; indeed, he's eager to sample even more of the American social scene. "I want to go to Mississippi," he says. "I like swamps. I want to see mangroves. I want to meet big fat cops with wads of tobacco in their cheeks who say, 'Boy.' " —LIESL SCHILLINGER

SKIN DEEP DEPT.

A beauty salon in Queens makes the manicure seem positively passé.

A TYPICAL Saturday for Mora Rowe, who is the head of editorial development at the I.M.G. modelling agency, in Manhattan, might run something like this: Toss Polaroid camera in backpack. Pick up friends who happen to be well-known fashion models and hairstylists (Alek Wek and Athena Curry, say, or Denilo Dixon). Drive Jeep directly to Jackson Diner in Jackson Heights, Queens. Order up some aloo gobi. Hit neighboring spice shops, sari outlets, and jewelry stores. Leave several hours for hand-and-foot-dyeing at Menka Beauty Salon. Go home.

Like Demi Moore, Mira Sorvino, Liv Tyler, and the artist formerly known as the Artist Formerly Known As Prince, Rowe is a recent convert to *mehndi*, a traditional Indian form of body-painting in which elaborate lacy patterns are traced in henna on the hands and feet—usually the hands and feet of Indian brides. "I got my hands done before the London fashion shows," says Rowe, who offers the fact that she grew up in Northern California as explanation for a longstanding fondness for things Indian. "A number of the girls are doing it. It takes two or three weeks to come off, but I've noticed some henna in magazine shoots, whether the theme was India or not."

On a busy weekend, the Menka salon receives a range of requests from clients who turn off Roosevelt Avenue at the Crazy Chicken place, or wander down Thirty-seventh Road past the Eagle Movie Theatre (now playing "Insaaf: The Final Justice"). Obvious signs of basic salon services: a pair of bubble dryers, three sticky waxing pots. Obvious signs of less run-of-the-mill activity: a fuzz of broken white threads littering the floor (refuse from the Indian depilatory method called threading, in which individual hairs are lassoed and yanked with a thread held taut in the beautician's teeth), and squares of clear cellophane, which, fashioned into cones, are used like cake-icing tubes for painting the body with henna paste.

"I've brought so many people out there," Rowe says. "My friend Denilo, he even hennaed his face." The owner of the Menka salon, Anil Merchant, is delighted with his newfound customers. Does he think the fashion crowd's *mehndi* requests might bother his bridal clients? "No. Why should they?" he says. "They are pleased, because non-Indian people are interested in something Indian. It's good."

—RACHEL URQUHART

The career is a dream. The pens are from Cross.

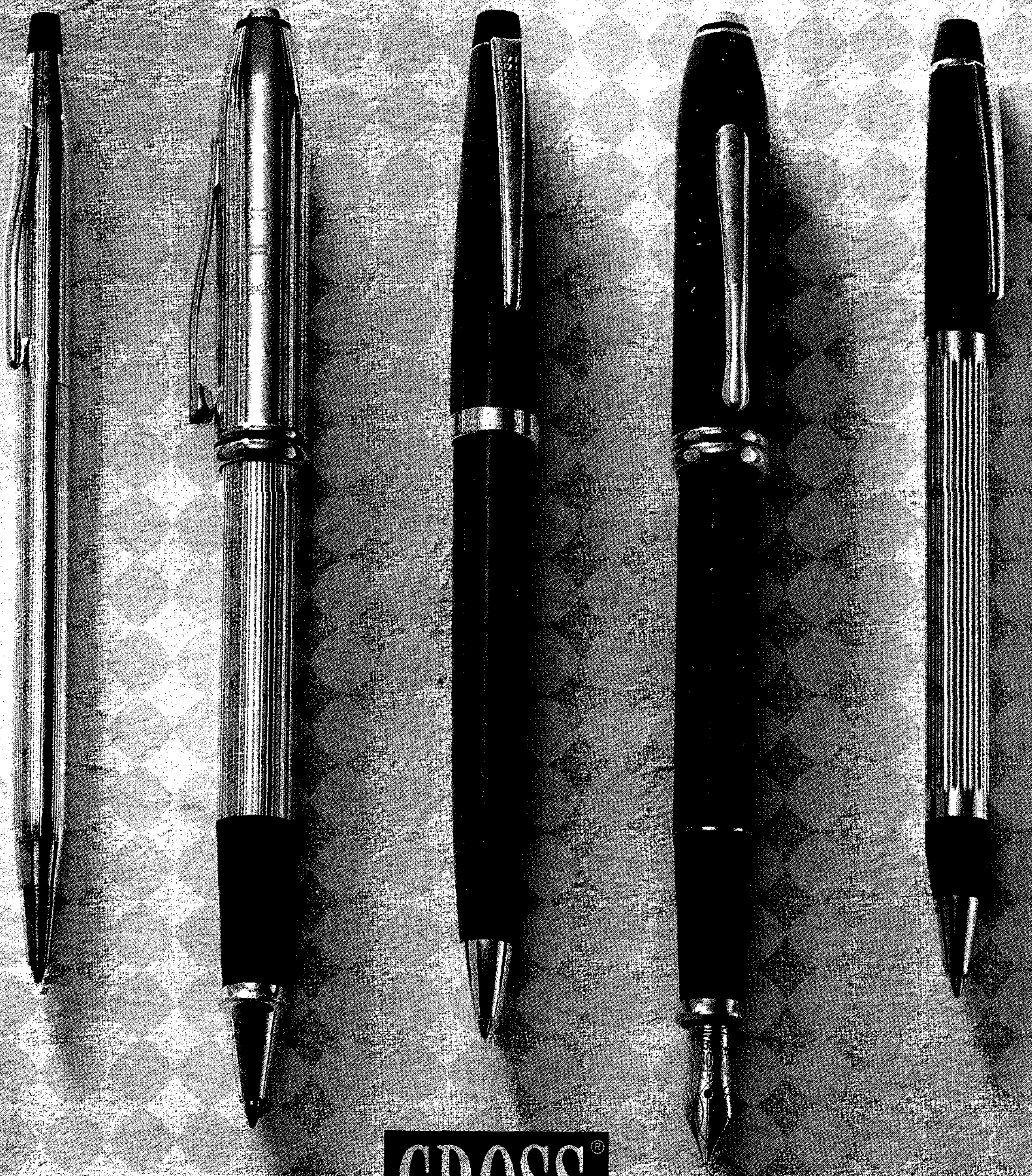
1987
Graduation gift from parents, who hoped it would be used for writing resume. Actually used to keep journal of travels through Europe.

1988
Gift from girlfriend, to celebrate first job. Used to write her a Dear John letter after discovering initials belonged to another boyfriend.

1991
Gift from co-workers to celebrate leaving and starting own company. Used to sign away house, car and retirement account as collateral for bank loan.

1993
Bought to draw up first multi-million dollar deal, which put company on industry "top ten to watch" list. Also used to write check paying off bank loan.

1996
Gift from employees to celebrate early retirement after IPO raised twenty-five million dollars. Used to keep journal through Europe.



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LIFE AND LETTERS

DAMME, THIS IS THE ORIENTAL SCENE FOR YOU!

Indians are writing some of the most adventurous fiction today. Why isn't it in Hindi (or Assamese, or Bengali, or one of the fifteen other national languages)?

BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

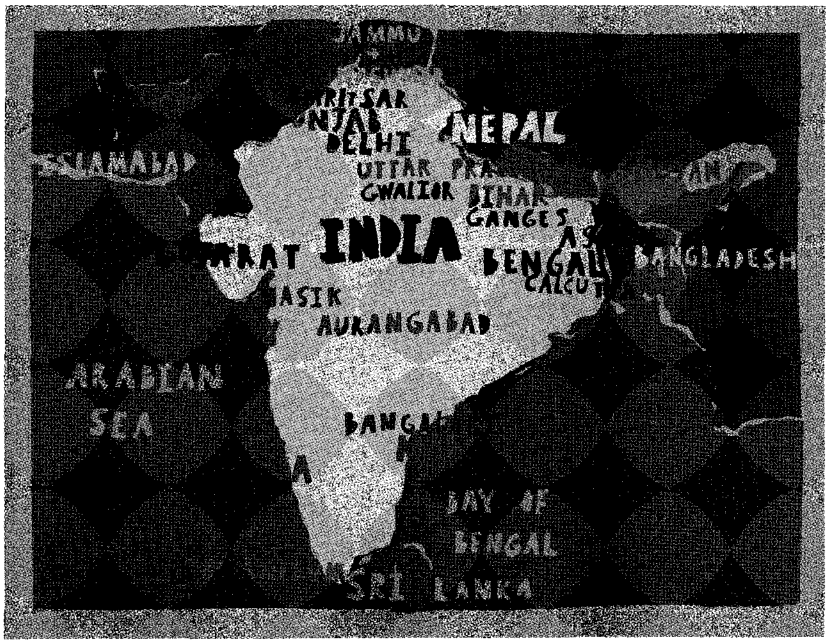
I ONCE gave a reading to a gathering of university students in Delhi, and when I'd finished a young woman put up her hand. "Mr. Rushdie, I read through your novel 'Midnight's Children,'" she said. "It is a very long book, but never mind, I read it through. And the question I want to ask you is this: Fundamentally, what's your point?" Before I could attempt an answer, she spoke again: "Oh, I know what you're going to say. You're going to say that the whole effort, from cover to cover—that is the point of the exercise. Isn't that what you were going to say?"

"Something like that, perhaps," I got out.

She snorted. "It won't do."

"Please," I begged. "Do I have to have just one point?"

"Fundamentally," she said, with impressive firmness, "yes."



MARK GAGNON

Contemporary Indian literature remains largely unknown in the United States, in spite of its considerable present-day energy and diversity. The few writers who have made an impression (R. K. Narayan, Vikram Seth) are inevitably read in a kind of literary isolation: texts without context. Some writers of Indian descent, such as V. S. Naipaul and Bharati Mukherjee, reject the ethnic label "Indian writers," perhaps in an effort to place themselves in other, better-understood literary contexts. Mukherjee sees herself nowadays as an American writer, while Naipaul would perhaps prefer to be read as an artist from nowhere and everywhere. Indians—and, following the partition of the subcontinent almost fifty years ago, one should also say Pakistanis—have long been migrants, seeking their fortunes in Africa, Australia, Britain, the Caribbean, and America, and this diaspora has produced many writers who lay claim to an excess of roots: writers like the Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali, whose verses look toward Srinagar from Amherst, Massachusetts, by way of other catastrophes. He writes:

> what else besides God disappears at
>   the altar?
> O Kashmir, Armenia once vanished.
>   Words are nothing,
> just rumors—like roses—to embel-
>   lish a slaughter.

How, then, is one to make any simple, summarizing statement—"Fundamentally, what's your point?"—about so multiform a literature, hailing from that huge crowd of a country (close to a billion people at the last count), that vast, metamorphic, continent-size culture, which feels, both to Indians and to visitors, like a non-stop assault on the senses, the emotions, the imagination, and the spirit? Put the Indian subcontinent in the Atlantic Ocean and it would reach from Europe to America; put it together with China and you've got almost half the population of the world.

These days, new Indian writers seem to emerge every few weeks. Their work is as polymorphous as the place. The approaching fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence is a useful pretext for a survey of half a century of postliberation writing. For many months now, I have been reading my way through this literature, and my Delhi interrogator may be pleased to hear that the experience has indeed led me to a single—unexpected and profoundly ironic—conclusion.

THIS is it: The prose writing—both fiction and nonfiction—created in this period by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the eighteen "recognized" languages of India, the so-called "vernacular languages," during the same time; and, indeed, this new, and still burgeoning, "Indo-Anglian" literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books. The true Indian literature of the first postcolonial half century has been made in the language the British left behind.

It is a large claim, though it may be an easy one for non-Indian readers to accept; if most of India's English-language writers are still largely unknown in the West, the problem is far greater in the case of the vernacular literatures. Of India's non-English-language authors, perhaps only the name of the 1913 Nobel Prize-winning Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore would be recognized internationally, and even his work, though still popular in Latin America, is now pretty much a closed book in the United States. In any case, it is a claim that runs counter to much of the received critical wisdom within India itself. It is also not a claim that I ever expected to make.

Admittedly, I did my reading only in

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— **Frank Kermode,** *The New York Review of Books*

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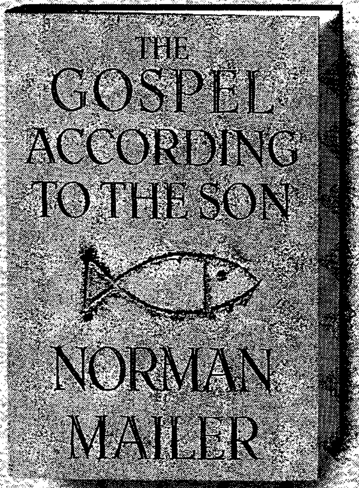
— **Robert Drake,** *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"His gospel is written in a direct, rather relaxed English that yet has an eerie, neo-Biblical dignity... the tone as a whole is **quietly penetrating."**

— **John Updike,** *The New Yorker*

"Mailer's is not an ignoble religious vision. On the contrary, it is a frankly heroic one."

— **Paul Baumann,** *The Boston Sunday Globe*



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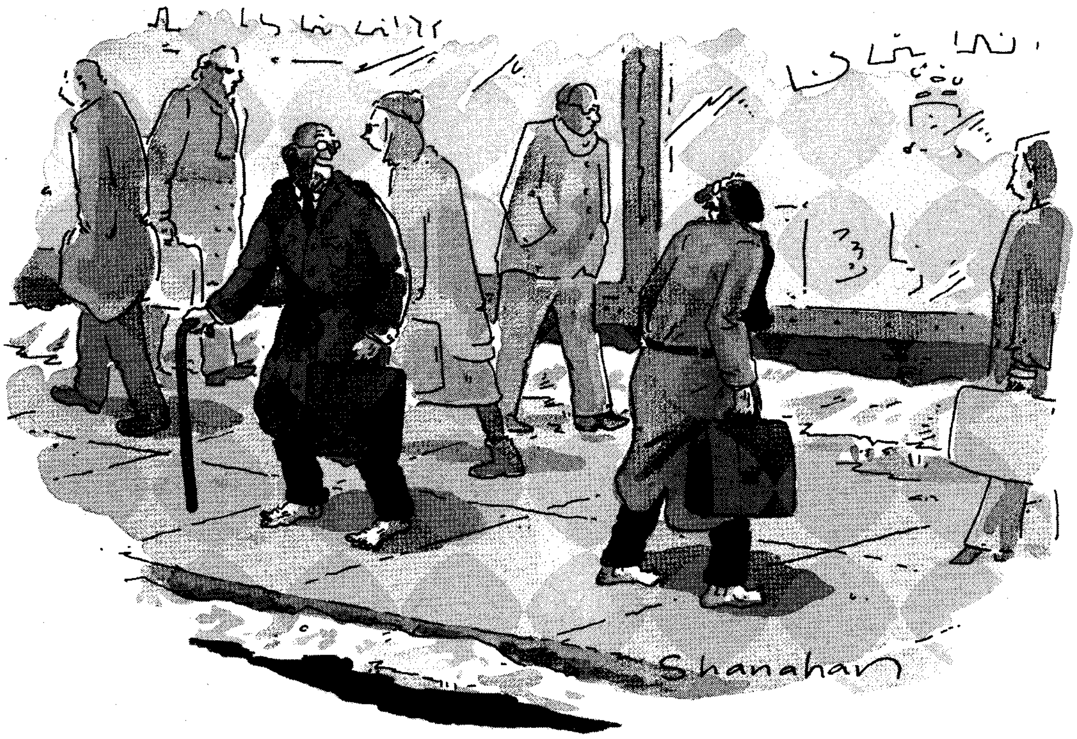

"It's me, Tom—Huck Finn!"

English, and there has long been a genuine problem of translation in India—not only into English but between the vernacular languages—and it is possible that good writers have been ill served by their translators' inadequacies. Nowadays, however, such bodies as the Indian Academy of the Arts (the Sahitya Akademi), UNESCO, and Indian publishers themselves have been putting substantial resources into the creation of better translations, and the problem, while not eradicated, is certainly much diminished.

Ironically, the century before independence contains many vernacular-language writers who would merit a place in any anthology: besides Rabindranath Tagore, there are Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Bibhutibhushan Banerjee (the author of "Pather Panchali," on which Satyajit Ray based his celebrated Apu trilogy of films), and Premchand, the prolific (and therefore rather variable) Hindi author of, among many other works, the famous novel of rural life "Godaan; or, The Gift of a Cow." Those who wish to seek out their leading present-day successors should try, for example, O. V. Vijayan (Malayalam), Suryakant Tripathi, also known as "Nirala" (Hindi), Nirmal Verma (Hindi), U. R. Ananthamurthy (Kannada), Suresh Joshi (Gujarati), Amrita Pritam (Punjabi), Qurratulain Hyder (Urdu), and Ismat Chughtai (Urdu), and make their own assessments. English versions exist of at least some of these writers' works; sometimes, as in the case of Vijayan, translated by the author.

To my own considerable astonishment, however, there is only one Indian writer in translation whom I would place on a par with the Indo-Anglian. (Actually, he's better than most of them.) That is Saadat Hasan Manto, an immensely popular Urdu writer of low-life fictions, whom conservative critics sometimes scorn for his choice of characters and milieus, much as Virginia Woolf snobbishly disparaged the fictional universe of James Joyce's "Ulysses." Manto's masterpiece is the short story "Toba Tek Singh," a parable of the partition of India, in which it is decided that the lunatics, too, must be partitioned—Indian lunatics to India, Pakistani lunatics to the new country of Pakistan. But for the inmates of an asylum in Lahore everything is unclear: the exact site of the frontier, and of the places of origin of the insane persons, too. The lunacies in the asylum become, in this savagely funny story, a perfect metaphor for the greater insanity of history.

The lack of first-rate writing in translation can only be a matter for regret. However, to speak more positively, it is a delight to be able to celebrate the quality of a growing collective English-language œuvre, whose status has long been argued over, but which has, in the last twenty years or so, begun to merit a place alongside the most flourishing literatures in the world.

For some Indian critics, English-language Indian writing will never be more than a postcolonial anomaly—the bastard child of Empire, sired on India by the departing British. Its continuing use of the old colonial tongue is seen as a fatal flaw that renders it forever inauthentic. Indo-Anglian literature evokes in these critics the kind of prejudiced reaction shown by some Indians toward the country's community of Anglo-Indians—that is, Eurasians.

Fifty years ago, Jawaharlal Nehru delivered, in English, the great "freedom at midnight" speech that marked the moment of independence:

> At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.

Since that indisputably Anglophone oration, the role of English itself has often been disputed in India. Attempts to coin medical, scientific, technological, and everyday neologisms in India's continental shelf of languages to replace the commonly used English words have sometimes succeeded but have more often comically failed. And when the Marxist government of the state of Bengal announced, in the early eighties, that the supposedly élitist, colonialist teaching of English would be discontinued in government-run primary schools, many on the left denounced the decision

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itself as élitist, because it would deprive the masses of the many economic and social advantages of speaking the world's language and only the affluent private-school élite would henceforth have that privilege. A well-known Calcutta graffito complained, "My son won't learn English. Your son won't learn English. But Jyoti Basu"—the Chief Minister—"will send his son abroad to learn English." One man's ghetto of privilege is another's road to freedom.

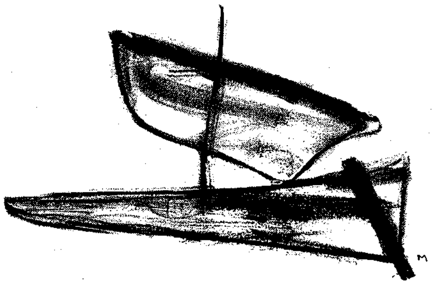
Like the Greek god Dionysius, who was dismembered and afterward reassembled—and who, according to the myths, was one of India's earliest conquerors—Indian writing in English has been called "twice-born" (by the critic Meenakshi Mukherjee) to suggest its double parentage. While I am, I must admit, attracted by the Dionysian resonances of this supposed double birth, it seems to me to rest on the false premise that English, having arrived from outside India, is and must necessarily remain an alien there. But my own mother tongue, Urdu, which was the camp argot of the country's earlier Muslim conquerors, was also an immigrant language, forged from a combination of the conquerors' imported Farsi and the local languages they encountered. However, it became a naturalized subcontinental language long ago; and by now that has happened to English, too. English has become an Indian language. Its colonial origins mean that, like Urdu and unlike all other Indian languages, it has no regional base; but in all other ways it has emphatically come to stay.

(In many parts of South India, people will prefer to converse with visiting North Indians in English rather than in Hindi, which feels, ironically, more like a colonial language to speakers of Tamil, Kannada, or Malayalam than does English, which has acquired in the South an aura of lingua-franca cultural neutrality. The new Silicon Valley-style boom in computer technology which is transforming the economies of Bangalore and Madras has made English in those cities an even more important language than before.)

Indian English, sometimes unattractively called "Hinglish," is not "English" English, to be sure, any more than Irish or American or Caribbean English is. And part of the achievement of English-language Indian writers is to have found literary voices that are as distinctively Indian, and also as suitable for any and all the purposes of art, as those of other English-language writers in Ireland, Africa, the West Indies, and the United States.

However, Indian critical assaults on this new literature continue to be made from time to time. Its practitioners are denigrated for being too upper-middle-class; for lacking diversity in their choice of themes and techniques; for being less popular in India than outside India; for possessing inflated reputations on account of the international power of the English language, and of the ability of Western critics and publishers to impose their cultural standards on the East; for living, in many cases, outside India; for being deracinated to the point where their work lacks the spiritual dimension essential for a "true" understanding of the soul of India; for being insufficiently grounded in the ancient literary traditions of India; for being the literary equivalent of MTV culture, or of globalizing Coca-Colonization; even, I'm sorry to report, for suffering from a condition that one sprightly recent commentator, Pankaj Mishra, calls "Rushdie-itis . . . a condition that has claimed Rushdie himself in his later works."

It is interesting that so few of these criticisms are literary in the pure sense of the word. For the most part, they do not deal with language, voice, psychological or social insight, imagination, or talent. Rather, they have to do with class, power, and belief. There is a whiff of political correctness about them: the ironic proposition that India's best writing since independence may have been done in the language of the departed imperialists is simply too much for some folks to bear. It ought not to be true, and so must not be permitted to be true. (That many of the attacks on English-language Indian writing are made in English by Indian writers who are themselves members of the college-educated, English-speaking élite is a further irony.)



LET us quickly concede what must be conceded. It is true that most of these writers come from the educated classes of India; but in a country still bedeviled by high illiteracy levels how could the situation be otherwise? It does not follow, however—unless one holds to a rigid, class-war view of the world—that writers with the privilege of a good education will automatically write novels that seek only to portray the lives of the bourgeoisie. It is true that there tends to be a bias toward metropolitan and cosmopolitan fiction, but there has been, during this half century, a genuine attempt to encompass as many Indian realities as possible, rural as well as urban, sacred as well as profane. This is also, let us remember, a young literature. It is still pushing out the frontiers of the possible.

The point about the power of the English language, and of the Western publishing and critical fraternities, also contains some truth. Perhaps it does seem, to some "home" commentators, that a canon is being foisted on them from outside. The perspective from the West is rather different. Here what seems to be the case is that Western publishers and critics have been growing gradually more and more excited by the voices emerging from India; in England, at least, British writers are often chastised by reviewers for their lack of Indian-style ambition and verve. It feels as if the East were imposing itself on the West, rather than the other way around. And, yes, English is the most powerful medium of communication in the world. Should we not, then, rejoice at these artists' mastery of it, and at their growing influence? To criticize writers for their success in "breaking out" is no more than parochialism (and parochialism is perhaps the main vice of the vernacular literatures). One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are insuring that India—or, rather, Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into the trap of writing *nationalistically*)—will henceforth be confident, indispensable parti-

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Granted, many of these writers do have homes outside India. Henry James, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Mavis Gallant, James Baldwin, Graham Greene, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, and Muriel Spark were or are wanderers, too. Muriel Spark, accepting in March, 1997, the British Literature Prize for a lifetime's achievement, went as far as to say that travel to other countries was essential for all writers. Literature has little or nothing to do with a writer's home address.

The question of religious faith, both as a subject and as an approach to a subject, is clearly important when we speak of a country as near to bursting with devotions as India; but it is surely excessive to use it—as does one leading academic, the redoubtable Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah—as a touchstone, so that Mulk Raj Anand is praised for his "daring" merely because, as a leftist writer, he allows a character to be moved by deep faith, while Arun Kolatkar's poetry is denigrated for "throwing away tradition and creating a vacuum" and thereby "losing relevance" because in "Jejuri," a cycle of poems about a visit to a temple town, he skeptically likens the stone gods in the temples to the stones on the hillsides nearby ("and every other stone / is god or his cousin"). In fact, many of the writers I admire have a profound knowledge of the "soul of India"; many have deeply spiritual concerns, while others are radically secular, but the need to engage with—to make a reckoning with—India's religious self is everywhere to be found.

The cheapening of artistic response that the allegations of deracination and Westernization imply is notably absent from the Indo-Anglian writers' work. As to the claims of excessive Rushdie-itis, I can't deny that on occasion I've felt something of the sort myself. On the whole, however, it seems to be a short-lived virus, and those whom it affects soon shake it off and find their own, true voices.

(An interesting sidelight. After the 1981 publication of my novel "Midnight's Children," I learned that the idea of a long saga-novel about a child born at the exact moment of independence—midnight, August 14-15, 1947—had occurred to other writers, too. A Goan poet showed me the first chapter

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Turning the corner of the street
he found three newborn puppies
in a gutter with a mother curled
around them.

Turning the corner of the street
she found a newborn naked baby,
male, battered, dead in the manhole
with no mother around.

Turning the corner of the street
the boy stepped on the junkie
lying in the alley, covered with flies,
a dog sniffing his crotch.

Just any day, not only after a riot,
even among the gamboge maples of fall
streets are full of bodies, invisible
to the girl under the twirling parasol.

—A. K. RAMANUJAN
(1929-1993)

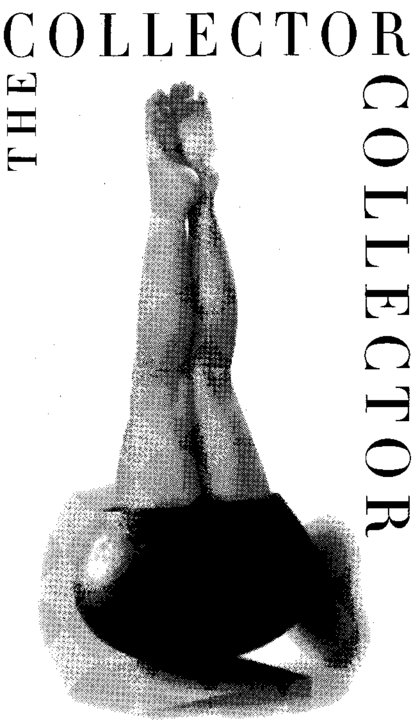
of an abandoned novel in which the "midnight child" was born not in Bombay but in Goa. And as I travelled round India I heard of at least two other aborted projects—one in Bengali, the other in Kannada—with nearly similar themes.)

At any rate, there is not, need not be, and should not be an adversarial relationship between English-language Indian literature and the other literatures of India. In my own case—and I suspect in the case of every Indo-Anglian writer—knowing and loving the Indian languages in which I was raised has remained of vital personal and artistic importance. Hindi-Urdu, the "Hindustani" of North India, remains an essential aspect of my sense of self as an individual, while as a writer I have been partly formed by the presence, in my head, of that other music—the rhythms, patterns, and habits of thought and metaphor of all my Indian tongues.

Whatever language we Indians write in, we drink from the same well. India, that inexhaustible horn of plenty, nourishes us all.

THE first Indian novel in English was a dud. "Rajmohan's Wife" (1864) is a poor, melodramatic thing. The writer, Bankim, reverted to Bengali and immediately achieved great renown. For the next seventy years or so, there was no English-language fiction of any quality. It was the generation of independence—"midnight's parents," one might call them—who were the true architects of this new tradition. (Jawaharlal Nehru himself was a fine writer; his autobiography and letters are important, influential works. And his niece Nayantara Sahgal, whose early memoir, "Prison and Chocolate Cake," contains perhaps the finest evocation of the heady time of independence, went on to become a major novelist.)

In that generation, Mulk Raj Anand was influenced by both Joyce and Marx but most of all, perhaps, by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. He is best known for social-realist works like the novels "Untouchable" (1935) and "Coolie" (1936), studies of the life of the poor, which could be compared to postwar Italian neorealist cinema (De Sica's "The Bicycle Thief," Rossellini's "Rome, Open City"). Raja Rao, a scholarly Sanskritist, wrote of his determination to make an Indian English for himself, but even his much praised portrait of village life, "Kanthapura," published in 1938, now seems dated, its approach at once grandiloquent and archaic. The centenarian autobiographer Nirad C. Chaudhuri has



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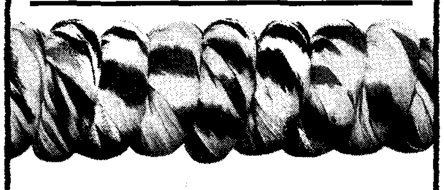
SNAKES AND LADDERS



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been, throughout his long life, an erudite, contrary, and mischievous presence. His view, if I may paraphrase and summarize it, is that India has no culture of its own, and that whatever we now call Indian culture was brought in from outside by the successive waves of conquerors. This view, polemically and brilliantly expressed, has not endeared him to many of his fellow-Indians. That he has always swum so strongly against the current has not, however, prevented "The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian" from being recognized as a masterpiece.

The most significant writers of this first generation, R. K. Narayan and G. V. Desani, have had opposite careers. Narayan's books fill a good-sized shelf; Desani is the author of a single novel, "All About H. Hatterr," and that volume is already fifty years old. Desani is almost unknown, while Narayan is, of course, a figure of world stature, for his creation of the imaginary town of Malgudi, so lovingly made that it has become more vividly real to us than most real places. (But Narayan's realism is leavened by touches of legend; the river Sarayu, for instance, on whose shores the town sits, is one of the great rivers of Hindu mythology. It is as if William Faulkner had set his Yoknapatawpha County on the banks of the Styx.)

Narayan shows us, over and over again, the quarrel between traditional, static India, on the one hand, and modernity and progress, on the other, represented, in many of his stories and novels, by a confrontation between a "wimp" and a "bully": "The Painter of Signs" and his aggressive beloved with her birth-control campaign; "The Vendor of Sweets" and the emancipated American daughter-in-law with the absurd "novel-writing machine"; and the mild-mannered printer and the extrovert taxidermist in "The Man-Eater of Malgudi." In his gentle, lightly funny art he goes to the heart of the Indian condition and beyond it—into the human condition itself.

The writer I have placed alongside Narayan, G. V. Desani, has fallen so far from favor that the extraordinary "All About H. Hatterr" is at present out of print in India. Milan Kundera once said that all modern literature descends from either Richardson's "Clarissa" or Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," and, if Narayan is India's Richardson, then Desani is his Shandean other. "Hatterr" 's dazzling, puzzling, leaping prose is the first genuine effort to go beyond the Englishness of the English language. Desani's central figure—"fifty-fifty of the species," the half-breed as unabashed antihero—leaps and capers behind the work of many of his successors. Desani writes:

> The earth was blotto with the growth of willow, peach, mango-blossom, and flower. Every ugly thing, and smell, was in incognito, as fragrance and freshness.
>
> Being prone, this typical spring-time dash and activity, played an exulting phantasmagoria-note on the inner-man. Medically speaking, the happy circumstances vibrated my ductless glands, and fused me into a wibble-wobble *Whoa, Jamieson!* fillip-and-flair to *live, live!*

Or, again:

> The incidents take place in India.
>
> I was exceedingly hard-up of cash: actually, in debts.
>
> And, it is amazing, how, out in the Orient, the shortage of cash gets mixed up with romance and females somehow!
>
> In this England, they say, if a fellah is broke, females, as a matter of course, forsake.
>
> Stands to reason.
>
> Whereas, out in the East, they attach themselves!
>
> Damme, this is the Oriental scene for you!

This is the "babu-English," the semi-literate, half-learned English of the bazaars, transmuted by erudition, highbrow monkeying around, and the impish magic of Desani's unique phrasing and rhythm into an entirely new kind of literary voice. Hard to imagine I. Allan Sealy's more recent, Eurasian comic epic, "The Trotter-Nama"—an enormous tome swirling with digressions, interpolations, exclamations, resumptions, encomiums, and catastrophes—without Desani. My own writing, too, learned a trick or two from him.

VED MEHTA is a writer known both for his astute commentaries on the Indian scene and for his several distinguished volumes of autobiography. The most moving of these is "Vedi," a memoir of a blind boyhood that describes cruelties and kindnesses with equal dispassion and great effect. (More recently, Firdaus Kanga, in his autobiographical fiction "Trying to Grow," has also transcended physical affliction with high style and comic brio.)

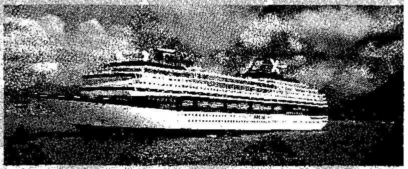
Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the author of the Booker Prize-winning "Heat and Dust" (afterward made into a Merchant-Ivory movie), is a master of the short-story form. As a writer, she is sometimes underrated in India because, I think, the voice of the rootless intellectual (so quintessentially her voice) is such an unfamiliar one in that country, where people's self-definitions are so rooted in their regional identities.

That Jhabvala has a second career as an award-winning screenwriter is well known. But not many people realize that India's greatest film director, the late Satyajit Ray, was also an accomplished author of short stories. His father edited a famous Bengali children's magazine, *Sandesh*, and Ray's biting little fables are made more potent by their childlike charm.

Anita Desai, one of India's major living authors, merits comparison with Jane Austen. In novels such as "Clear Light of Day"—written in a lucid, light English full of subtle atmospherics—she displays both her exceptional skill at social portraiture and an unsparing, Jane-like mordancy of insight into human motivations. "In Custody," perhaps her best novel to date, makes fine use of English to depict the decay of another language, Urdu, and the high literary culture that lived in it. Here the poet, the last, boozing, decrepit custodian of the dying tradition, is (in a reversal of Narayan) the "bully," and the novel's central character, the poet's young admirer, is the "wimp." The dying past, the old world, Desai tells us, can be as much of a burden as the awkward, sometimes wrongheaded present.

Though V. S. Naipaul approaches India as an outsider, his engagement with it has been so intense that no account of its modern literature would be complete without him. His three nonfiction books on India—"An Area of Darkness," "India: A Wounded Civilization," and "India: A Million Mutinies Now"—are key texts, and not only because of the hackles they have raised. Many Indian critics have taken issue with the harshness of his responses. Some have fair-mindedly conceded that he does attack things worth attacking. "I'm anti-Naipaul when I visit the West," one leading South Indian novelist told me, "but I'm often pro-Naipaul back home."

Some of Naipaul's targets, like (this is from "A Wounded Civilization") the intermediate-technology institute that invents "reaping shoes" (with blades attached) for Indian peasants to use in harvesting grain, merit the full weight of



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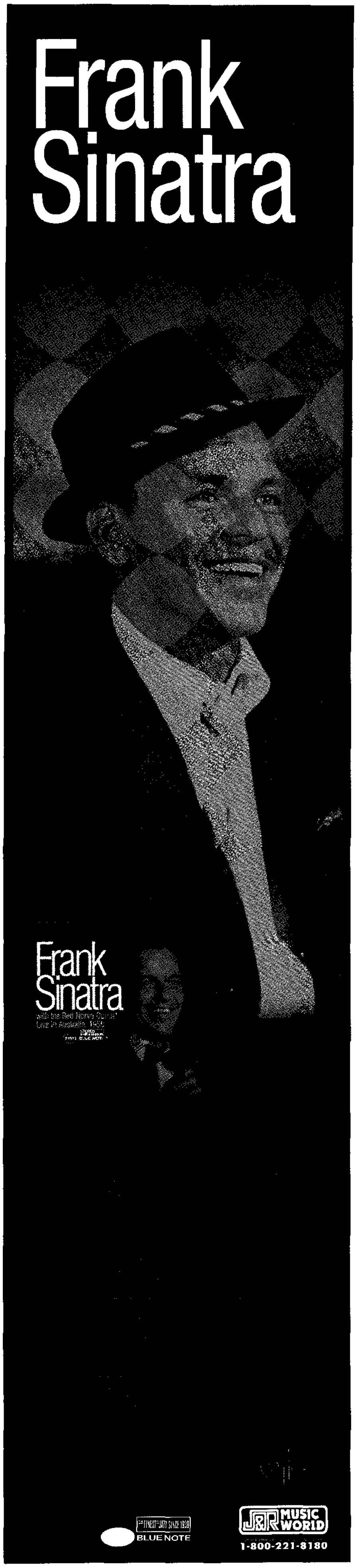
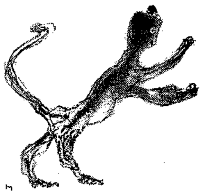


his scorn. At other times, he appears merely supercilious. India, his migrant ancestors' lost paradise, apparently cannot stop disappointing him. By the third volume of the series, however, which was written in 1990, he seems more cheerful about the country's condition. He speaks approvingly of the emergence of "a central will, a central intellect, a national idea," and disarmingly, even movingly, confesses to the atavistic edginess of mood in which he made his first trip almost thirty years earlier: "The India of my fantasy and heart was something lost and irrecoverable. . . . On that first journey, I was a fearful traveller."



In "An Area of Darkness," Naipaul's comments on Indian writers elicit from this reader a characteristic mixture of agreement and dissent. He writes:

> The feeling is widespread that, whatever English might have done for Tolstoy, it can never do justice to the Indian "language" writers. This is possible; what little I read of them in translation did not encourage me to read more. Premchand . . . turned out to be a minor fabulist. . . . Other writers quickly fatigued me with their assertions that poverty was sad, that death was sad . . . and many of the "modern" short stories were only refurbished folk tales.

Here he is expressing, in his emphatic, unafraid way, what I have also felt (though I think more highly of Premchand than he). He also says:

> The novel is of the West. It is part of that Western concern with the condition of men, a response to the here and now. In India thoughtful men have preferred to turn their backs on the here and now and to satisfy what President Radhakrishnan calls "the basic human hunger for the unseen." It is not a good qualification for the writing or reading of novels.

And here I can accompany him only some of the way. It is true that many learned Indians go in for a sonorously impenetrable form of critico-mysticism. I once heard an Indian writer of some renown, who was much interested in India's ancient wisdoms, expounding his theory of what one might call Motionism. "Consider Water," he advised us. "Water without Motion is—what? Is a lake. Very well. Now, Water plus Motion is—what? Is a river. You see? The Water is still the same Water. Only Motion has been added. By the same token," he continued, making a breathtaking intellectual leap, "Language is Silence, to which Motion has been added."

(A fine Indian poet, who was sitting beside me in the great man's audience, murmured in my ear, "Bowel without Motion is—what? Is constipation! Bowel plus Motion is—what? Is shit!")

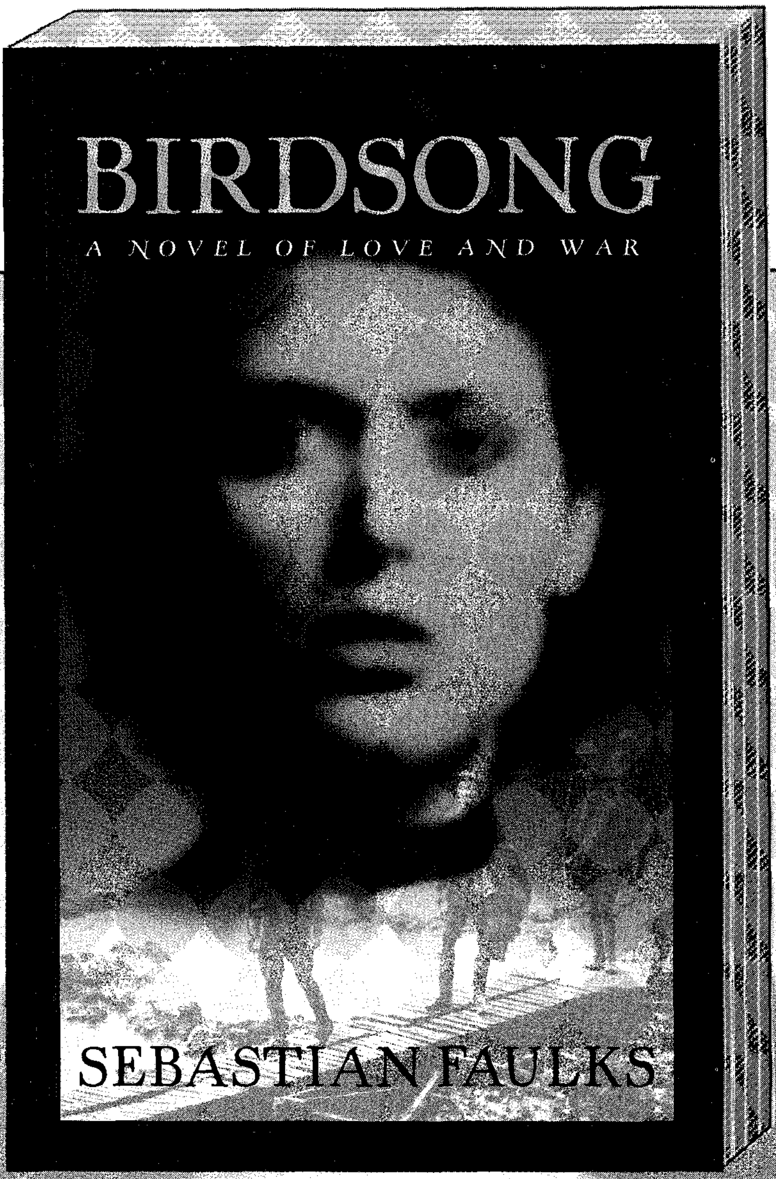
So I agree with Naipaul that mysticism is bad for novelists. But, in the India I know, for every obfuscating Motionist there is a debunking Bowelist whispering in one's ear; for every unworldly seeker for the ancient wisdoms of the East there is a clear-eyed witness responding to the here and now in precisely that fashion which Naipaul inaccurately calls uniquely Western. And when Naipaul concludes by saying that in the aftermath of the "abortive" Indo-British encounter India is little more than a (very Naipaulian) community of mimic men—that the country's artistic life has stagnated, that "the creative urge" has "failed," that "Shiva has ceased to dance"—then I fear he and I part company altogether. "An Area of Darkness" was written as long ago as 1964, a mere seventeen years after independence and a little early for an obituary notice. The growing quality of Indian writing in English may yet change his mind.

In the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the flow of that good writing has become a flood. Bapsi Sidhwa is technically Pakistani, but literature has no need of partitions, particularly since Sidhwa's novel "Cracking India" is one of the finest responses made to the horror of the division of the subcontinent. Gita Mehta's "A River Sutra" is an important attempt by a thoroughly modern Indian to make her reckoning with the Hindu culture from which she emerged. Padma Perera, Anjana Appachana (whose major new novel, "Listening Now," will be published next January), and Githa Hariharan, less well known than Sidhwa and Mehta, confirm the quality of contemporary writing by Indian women.

A number of different styles of work are evolving: the Stendhalian realism of a writer like Rohinton Mistry, the author of two acclaimed novels, "Such a Long Journey" and "A Fine Balance," and of a collection of stories, "Tales from Firozsha Baag"; the equally naturalistic but lighter, more readily charming prose of Vikram Seth (there is, admittedly, a kind of perversity in invoking lightness in the context of a book boasting as much sheer avoirdupois as "A Suitable Boy," which runs to a thousand three hundred and forty-nine pages); the elegant social observation of Upamanyu Chatterjee ("English August"); and the more flamboyant manner of Vikram Chandra ("Love and Longing in Bombay"). Amitav Ghosh's most impressive achievement to date is the nonfiction study of India and Egypt "In an Antique Land." It may be that his greatest strength will turn out to be as an essayist of this sort. Sara Suleri, whose memoir "Meatless Days" is, like Bapsi Sidhwa's "Cracking India," a visitor from across the Pakistani frontier, is a nonfiction writer of immense originality and grace. And Amit Chaudhuri's languorous, elliptical, beautiful prose is impressively impossible to place in any category at all.

Most encouragingly, yet another talented generation has begun to emerge. The Bengali-Keralan writer Arundhati Roy has arrived to the accompaniment of a loud fanfare. Her novel, "The God of Small Things," is full of ambition and sparkle, and is written in a highly wrought and utterly personal style. Equally impressive are the débuts of two other first novelists. Ardashir Vakil's "Beach Boy" and Kiran Desai's "Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard" are, in very unalike ways, highly original books. The Vakil book, a tale of growing up near Juhu Beach, Bombay, is sharp, funny, and fast; the Kiran Desai, a Calvinoesque fable of a misfit boy who climbs a tree and becomes a sort of petty guru, is lush and intensely imagined. Kiran Desai is the daughter of Anita: her arrival establishes the first dynasty of modern Indian fiction. But she is very much her own writer, the newest of all these voices, and welcome proof that India's encounter with the English language, far from proving abortive, continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts.

THE map of the world in the standard Mercator projection is not kind to India, making it look substantially smaller than, say, Greenland. On the map of world literature, too, India has been undersized for too long. Fifty years after India's independence, however, that age of obscurity is coming to an end. India's writers have torn up the old map and are busily drawing their own. ♦



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JOURNALS

INDIA, FOR THE PLAIN HELL OF IT

In 1952, the author—after spending most of his adult life abroad—decided to return to his homeland. What in the world was he thinking of?

BY G. V. DESANI

G. V. Desani was reared in India and in his late teens ran away to England, where he became a foreign correspondent and a BBC radio announcer. It was in London, during the Second World War, that he wrote the novel "All About H. Hatterr," in which he introduced the playful, uniquely Indian voice of H. Hatterr, a Eurasian autodidact seeking to go "completely Indian to an extent few pure non-Indian blood sahib fellers have done." Desani continued to revise the book over the next forty years. A definitive edition, published in 1986, contains an introduction, a post-introduction, two "Warning!"s, five lengthy "Personal Footnotes," and a thirty-six-page afterthought ("With Iron Hand, I Defend You, Mr H. Hatterr, Gentleman!").

Desani began this journal just after his novel was first published. A second novel has yet to appear. He is now eighty-seven and lives outside Dallas, Texas.

LONDON, 1952

I am going back to India. I expect to return. I am leaving all my things—books, manuscripts, clothes, everything. I can truthfully say that all my ambitions and expectations from this city have been fulfilled. Yet, I am not happy. This is a defeat. I am ashamed to admit it to anyone.

I have boarded the Norwegian freighter Trianon, sailing to India.

We are carrying all sorts of cargo aboard. There are a few hundred acid bottles—green glass—poised on the open deck. I have twice imagined awful things if these should break and "it rains acid on us." Broken glass, for me, is a terrible image. "She had no eyes. Just blood-stained holes and filled with bits of pointed glass." (I have written this in "H. Hatterr.")

BOMBAY

We have arrived in India.

I have gone to live with two Indian millionaires for a fortnight.

The eldest millionaire confided in me till the early hours of the morning. He is absolutely without friends.

These men of big business nurse terrible secrets. The matter and substance of such secrets makes it possible for a man to be displaced from the membership of the starving millions to millionaire.

Their business partner is expected today. He is "twice millionaire." He *helps everybody*. He does good all round. He is a *simple man*. (I have gathered these facts from my hosts.)

The feeling of guilt is with me all the time. Everything implicates. A beggar on the road—as I write this note—is making noise. He has a woman with him and she has a child in her arms. It is made to cry all the time. (A device to make infants and children scream and attract sympathy is to burn their mouths with chili powder. If the mouth is no longer sensitive, then glans penis, the anus, the vagina, and the eyes are so treated.) His voice is raised to a screaming pitch, addressing a woman as "O Jamna! O Ganga!," the revered names of the two sacred rivers.

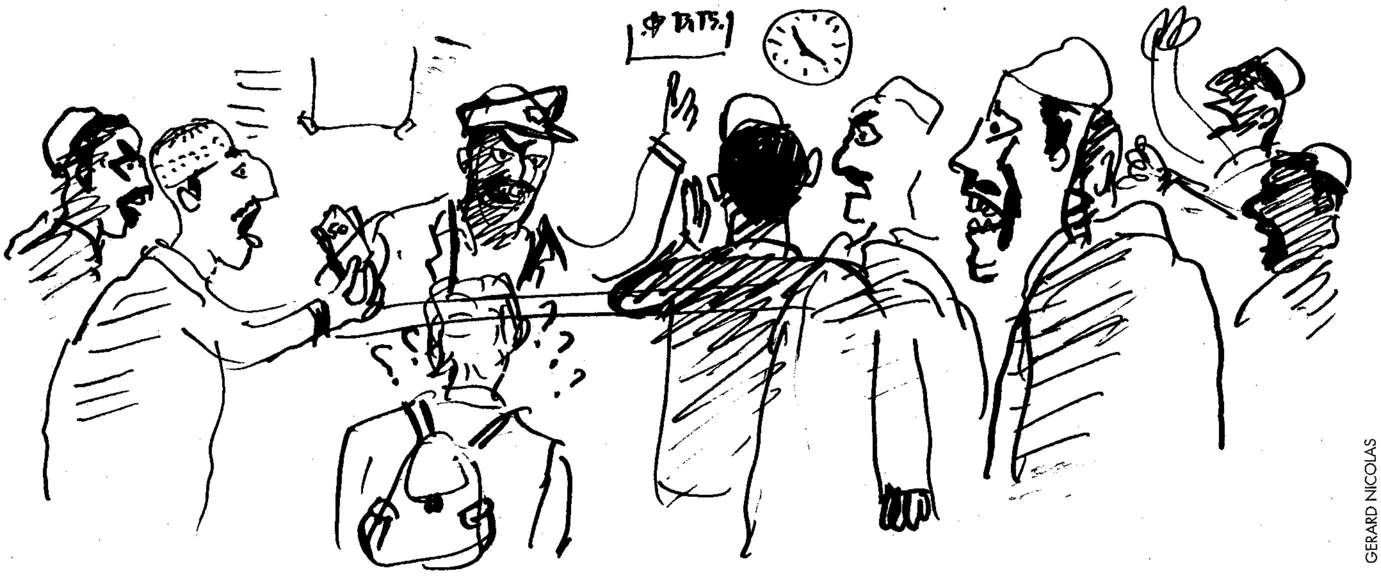
Following him—driven on a little wooden cart, with wooden wheels, and it creaks and clatters—is a man, a monstrosity, who has swollen legs.

I find it impossible to raise my mind above the haunting, ugly, and unforgettable things on the road: the exhibitions of hunger, disease, distress. It is as if one's roommates—the people on the road are some twenty feet away and near enough to be roommates—were crying and raving and showing their wounds to you. I might be living in the isolation ward or the morgue of a hospital—as a helpless onlooker.

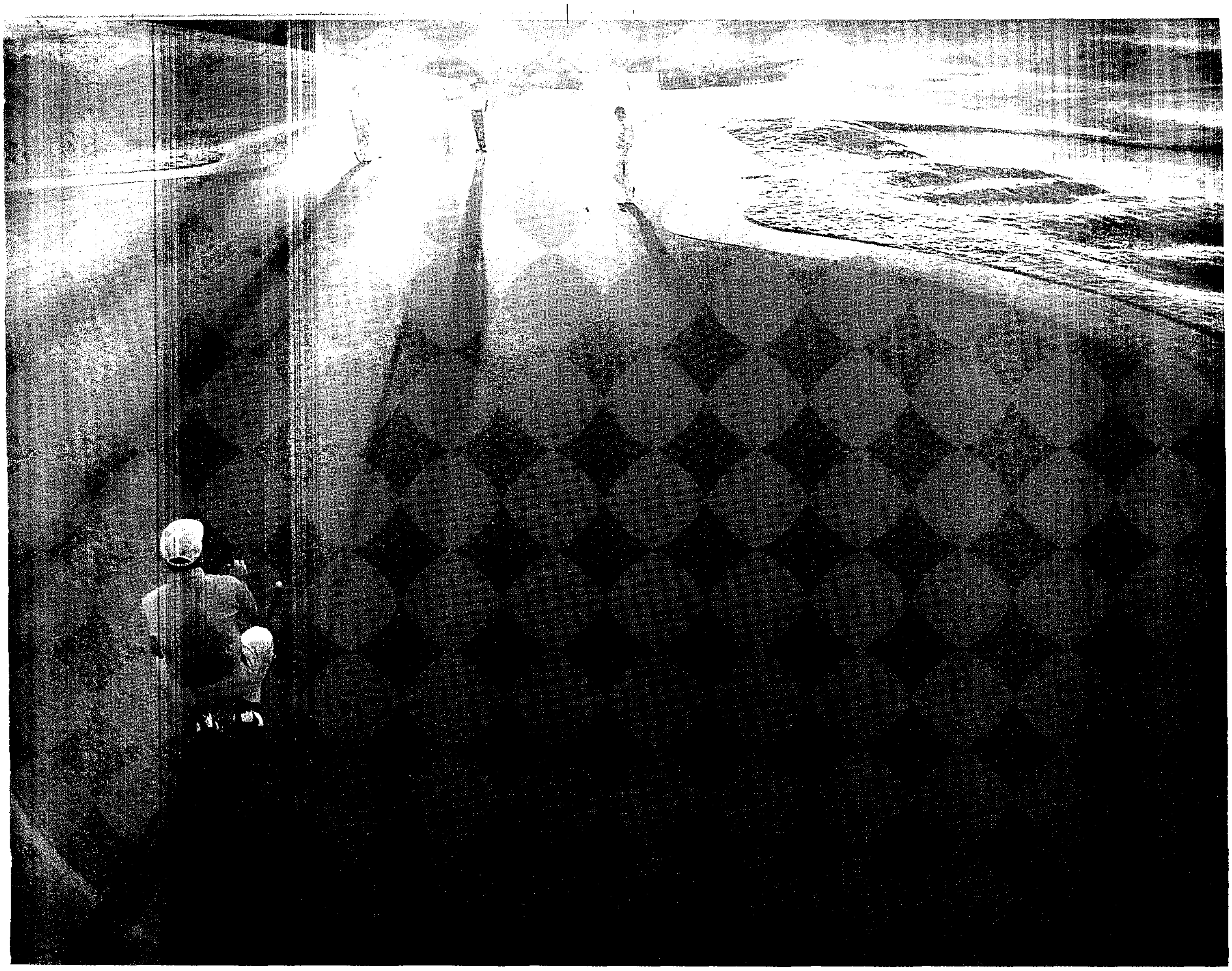
The Partner has arrived.

He asked me if I had seen "*the greatest work of art in the world*?"

I said something about his being a difficult question and that I might, per-



GERARD NICOLAS



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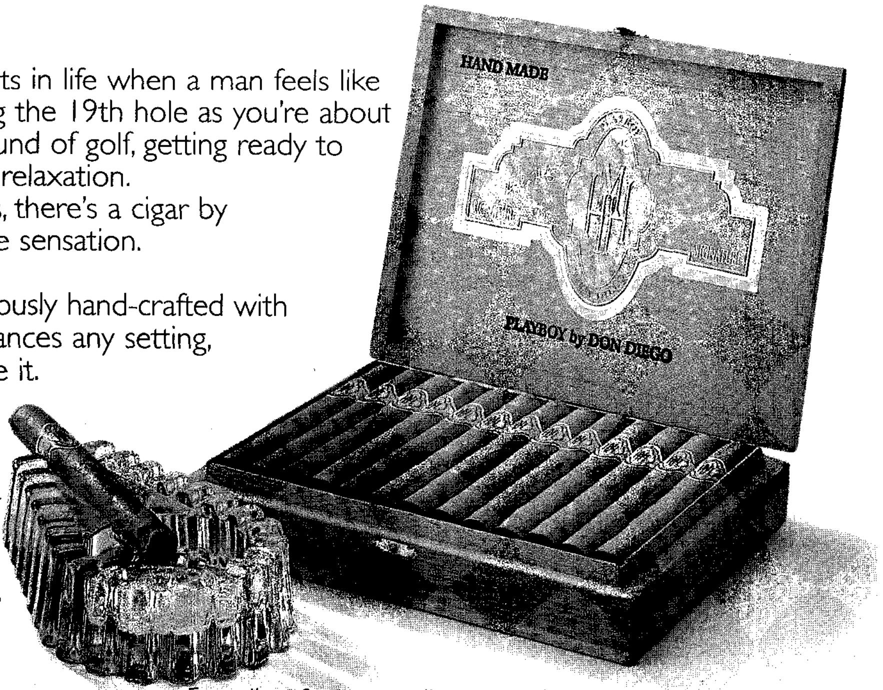

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haps, ask him the same question. "Have you seen it?"

Answering, he asked, "Have you seen Ajanta Caves?"

"Can't see everything," I replied.

There and then he offered to fill this gap in my education.

This is undoubtedly the most exciting thing that has happened to me since I arrived in India.

I go as his guest.

We are leaving tomorrow.

I met the Partner and his young son-in-law at the railway station.

He left the son-in-law on the platform to look after the luggage and asked me to get into a taxi.

We went to the crematorium. It was a plot of land with the odor of scorched flesh. The ash was flying, as the dust does.

We collected a tin full of charred bones. These were the remains of the Partner's aunt.

I carried the tin.

Back at the station, the Partner ordered the son-in-law to take charge of the tin. The son-in-law hesitated. It was obvious that neither wanted the tin for fear of pollution. Something of the dead, they believe, clings to the *asthis* (the bones) of the dead. It is taboo material. It belonged to the Partner by rights and not to the son-in-law. (The Partner is the chief mourner.)

I quietly packed up the tin in my canvas bag, thereby—I noticed—striking something like awe about me. The Partner said it was a "noble, self-sacrificing act."

We were travelling "intermediate" class. "I am a simple man," he said as he saw me take notice of the fact that we were not travelling first class (as we should) or even second class.

The Partner said we should get off the train at *1:25 in the morning*. I was surprised. He said this was because—on our way to see the greatest work of art in the world—we would have to get off at Nasik, that would be at *1:25 in the morning*, to attend to his aunt's last rites.

After the train started both the Partner and the son-in-law fell asleep and were snoring. (I did not sleep.)

We got off at Nasik. The Partner began haggling with a taxi driver—one of several sleeping on the wheels of their taxis.

"I say," the Partner was saying to the taxi driver, "twelve annas, considering you are a poor man. You people have to live. I say, yes. But no robbing! You say, 'Government rate.' Considering the bus fare is only four annas! That is also Government rate! We can wait for the bus. But I say, you are a poor man. No daylight robbery, I say."

The son-in-law and I waited for him to finish the argument.

It was clear to me, this early morning, that the Partner had not come this way for the love of art.

He came this way to attend to the last rites of his aunt, who died issueless, and whose urn-bearer I am.

The bones must be consigned to the nearest holy river. It is an ancient Hindu custom. We are approaching the river Godavari now. I and the son-in-law are the chief mourner's assistants. We serve other purposes, too. We keep watch (should the Partner drop off to sleep), mind the luggage, and it is only if assistants are about that one can save on hotel bills and sleep in railway waiting rooms.

The river was a ghastly sight.

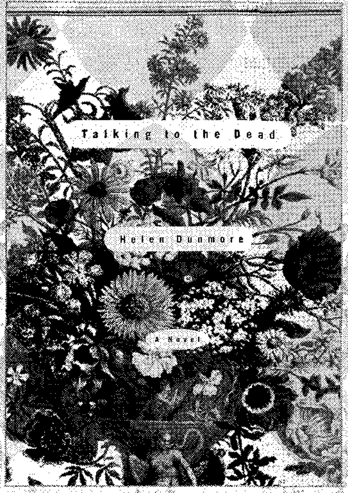
Pilgrims squatted on the street corners, each with a *lota* or a *lotiya* (a metal vessel) containing water. With the hanging end of a turban, a towel, a napkin, or the end of a sari, the nose was covered. After defecation, with the left hand—by cupping the palm—the body was cleansed with water. Finally, the hands and the vessel were scoured in the river with sand, mud, ashes, or soap. The running water—being "holy"—was ceremoniously drunk by the pilgrims in cupped palms and carried home in metal containers.

The poorest peasants were there, making obeisances, placing their foreheads on the sacred earth. Terrible infections are carried by such means. I saw a man with weeping sores sitting where another man's forehead later rested in reverence. A minstrel in a long skirtlike garment and tinted turban played on cymbals, moving his feet in time. A party of peasants paid him one *paisa* to sing out the names of their ancestors.

The water of the river was foul with soap and the ashes of the dead. About a hundred women were washing and beating clothes. Everybody washes hands in the water after answering calls of nature. People were drinking the holy water and bathing in it "to wash off their sins."

The Partner was surrounded by Brahmins.

After half an hour of haggling, he hired a *purohit* (one of the traditional priests), and I found him seated on the top step of the ghat, wearing a dhoti,



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—*The New York Times Book Review*

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bare-chested, and being untruthful: "I am a poor man, Maharaja!"

The *purohit*, whom the Partner addressed as Maharaja—a great king, the traditional appellation for a Brahmin—stuck to the Partner, intent upon sucking his blood, regardless of appearances. Yet, he managed to impart to the Partner a feeling of indulging in "sacred things." I saw the Partner repeatedly dipping a marigold in the fouled water and shedding drops on a tree (the last gesture to "free the soul" of his late aunt).

I heard a man, who brushed past me, reciting a Sanskrit *stotra* (a hymn of praise) and the words affected me deeply. She it is, Who is all Manifestation whatsoever, and She is the river Ganga, and the river Yamuna, and the *gupta*—the unrevealed—river Sarasvati. "And Thou abidest," he recited, "in the Muladhara." (Which is a way of saying that the benevolent God is everywhere and inside us, too.)

I could not escape the conclusion that the Partner, his dead, the Brahmins, and all the other people about me (and I) have decided to seek Her in Excreta rather than in the clouds.

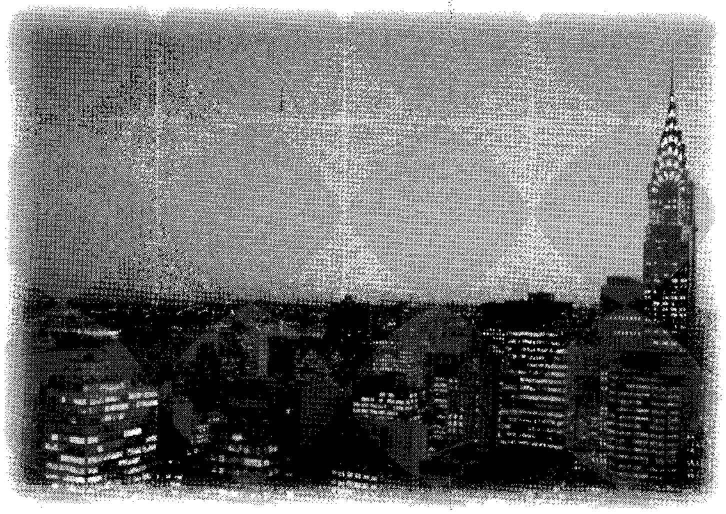
Our next stop was a *dharamshala*, a pilgrims' rest house, built by the charitable for the convenience of pilgrims.

To arrive by a taxi impresses the keepers of doss-houses.

To show him off (to our advantage), the driver was kept waiting. The Partner made the driver carry our luggage into the *dharamshala* and saved on coolie charges, too. He said to the driver, "If there is no coolie present, you will help the poor pilgrims? It is right, I say!" And, of course, he withheld the fare due, till the driver had "helped the poor pilgrims."

The caretaker was fifty-five and very fat. Bribes, greasy food, and sugar had made him a spectacle. He warned us about the water shortage, and he told us about the privies. "If occupied, your Honors can go upstairs. The two are always occupied, your Honor," he said to the Partner with some emotion, and he told us about the flush system. It does not work. You flush yourself with a tin of water. (He pointed out to us a number of empty Glaxo baby-food tins.) The *bhangi*—the scavenger—clears the mess with a bucket thrice a day.

The floor of the room the caretaker gave us was tiled gray and black and was revoltingly grubby. There were grease smears everywhere. (They cook on the floor and the frying pans spit fat all



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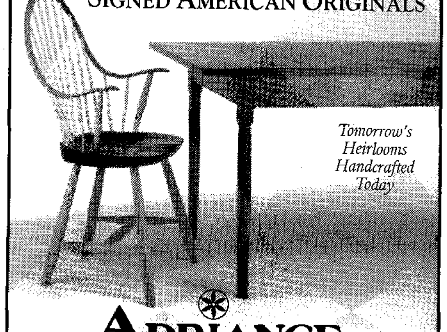

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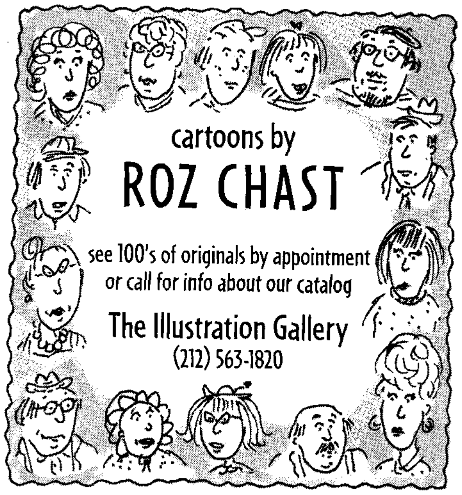

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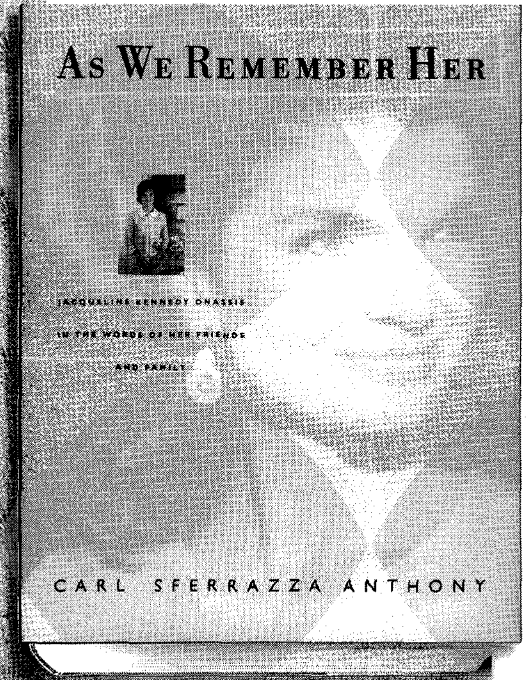

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over.) There were five sparrows' nests and the sparrows were in and out all the time. The floor was full of their droppings. The passage next to the only window was an open latrine used by children. Among those squatting in it was the caretaker's youngest, whom he pointed out to me, and to whom I addressed an evasive nod.

The three of us had no sleep.

We were attacked by bedbugs. I killed about two hundred. When squashed they squirted a bad odor.

The mosquitoes were awful and the insect repellent—manufactured in India by a well-known firm of British chemists—had no effect. They bit through it.

I spent the night in rage and helplessness. Even the son-in-law, a man of few words, said that he had been "chewed alive." I saw him switching on and off the battery torch throughout the night.

The Partner's bed, too, was stained with blood.

I found his arms and legs red, and swollen, and he was nervous from disturbed sleep. He kept screwing and unscrewing a bottle till he made the top useless.

The caretaker came in the following morning and asked me if I needed "service." I said something about leaving. "What!" he exclaimed. "People come to this holy *tirth* from all over the country, and your Honor wants to leave?" I said something about wanting to be quiet. "It is not quiet here?" he asked, surprised.

Quite displeased, I said, "Your *dharamshala* is dirty." (I meant it as an insult.)

I drew his attention to the urinal, which was "past mentioning." There was a four-inch-thick coating of cream and liver-of-sulfur fur on the tiles. (You could not see the tiles for the fur, and the stench was awful.) The fur should be removed with sulfuric acid, I said, the very first thing.

He replied firmly that his *dharamshala* was the best in town. I went to the bazaar and spent all the spare change I had and bought loads of insecticides, DDT, and (strong, industrial) pest-control powders.

For one hour, while both the Partner and the son-in-law were away with the Brahmins, I cleaned up the place.

When I was nearly done—having swept, washed, and thoroughly medicated the place—the caretaker arrived and protested strongly. "Your Honor doing *this*? I can get a coolie! Get a coolie, someone!" he shouted.

As I did not want to be disturbed, I or-

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dered him out of the room. He was surprised but obeyed.

It was absolutely quiet all night. The treatment had been entirely successful. I slept very soundly.

I was up at five. I left for the river at six.

I found hundreds of pilgrims sleeping by the river.

I walked past hurriedly and at seven boarded a bus to Triyambaka Shiva temple.

It is one of the twelve most important Shiva temples in India.

Outside the temple I bought some heartbreakingly beautiful flowers from six eager women, who addressed me as "the Fortunate One," and "Raja."

There was nobody inside the great stone temple. Below the floor level, down in the vestibule, three priests were chanting Sanskrit hymns, and offering worship to the image of Shiva. A very thin stream of water was falling on it and the light from the lamps glazed the water, making it look like a thread of gold. The incense was enticing and the yellow of the marigolds, beautiful.

As a supplicant, I stood by the door, offered my flowers, and prayed. I do not remember more.

When we arrived at Aurangabad, it was raining. After discussing prices of hotels—there were representatives canvassing custom at the station—the Partner chose one.

We were up at five. We had hired a taxi to go to the Ajanta Caves.

The fourth person in the taxi was a Parsi. He worked as head clerk for an oil company in Persia. He had come all the way to pay homage to Indian art. "This is a pilgrimage for me," he said.

The Partner kept us waiting for twenty minutes. The taxi driver said we should hurry. It gets so hot when the sun is high. On getting into the taxi, the Partner asked us all a question. "Why does one get so weak after every bowel movement?"

That question, and his dress—the dhoti, the undervest, a shirt hanging out, and a jacket (always the jacket, to carry money in the inside pocket) and a pair of shoes, no socks (leather gets wet from perspiration and the shoes stink), and a cotton-and-wool-mixture boat-shaped cap (the caps smell sour after two weeks' wear), all these details—interested the taximan and the Parsi. It was obvious, they decided, he was "not class." (The Partner is never conscious of such a possibility. He is "twice millionaire." No upper class *can* exist.) And they started dealing with him accordingly—in a semi-facetious manner.

That was a mistake. It suited the Partner to be so treated and he started *dealing* with them—selling, bargaining—and without having to observe appearances, or any pretense we might have had to face-saving. He quite automatically took his position as a parasitical organism. The blood-sucking relationship was established. He could deal with the dogs on their own terms—which were, as I noted, semi-facetious.

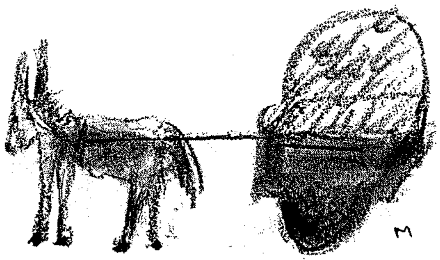
By the time we reached the caves—the world-famous Ajanta Caves—the pilgrim from Persia (passenger No. 4) began feeling the strain and was avoiding the Partner.

When we were about the caves, No. 4 drew my attention to a notice on the wall, which stated that a light was an absolute necessity. "We ought to share one light and the tax," No. 4 suggested. He would pay half.

The Partner joined us. I repeated No. 4's generous proposal to him. *He said absolutely nothing.* Assuming this to be an agreement, No. 4 walked away, toward the office. The Partner made a gesture of contempt behind No. 4's back—a thumb-up sign, which is an Indian the-phallus's-up! sign, an aggressive gesture—and made no other move.

No. 4 returned with the light, followed by a guide. The Partner said to me (in English), "Let's go and get a light!" No. 4 said, "I have got it!" The Partner: "You have got it?" No. 4: "Here it is." The Partner: "Thank you too much!" That concluded the *deal.* I was mortified. (I could not look the man straight in the face, although the Partner, having triumphed in the *deal*, was in his best form.)

It was with these thoughts and emotions that I entered Cave No. 1. This is the holy of holies. The guide told us about the Elephant Buddha. (The Buddha once incarnated as an elephant.) He pointed out, focussing the light on the figure, the ornaments of "those days." The Partner shouted a question. "Elephant or Buddha? Is this a joke?"



When we entered a cave—inside which was nothing, no frescoes—the Partner protested. Looking down at a page of the guidebook, which he had borrowed from No. 4, he asked, "Eh? What is this? Nothing here? Are they looting the public by advertising? They advertise and people go to Ajanta! They spend their hard-earned money to see Indian culture! And there is nothing here!" He turned to me and asked, "Is this their Buddhist latrine, or what?"

In another cave, commenting on a bit of faded color on a figure's ankle, he asked me, "They wore socks in those days, eh?" I pretended not to have heard the question and started making notes. (Not about the works of art but about these proceedings: "He says they wore socks in those days.")

The Partner turned to No. 4 and asked him, "Is this a painting, or what?" And, "Is this a man, or what?" And, "Why is his nose broken?"

The guide said to No. 4, pointing out a cup, "See, Sahib, a cup of those times." The Partner interrupted the guide with the observation "It is a champagne cup." The guide: "I did not say that, Sahib." The Partner shouted, "It *is*, daddy!"

In the struggle—it *was* a struggle, between the artists who had toiled for centuries and this man—this man won. Shortly after that, I found myself climbing down the steps.We had seen the "world-famous Ajanta Caves."

At Aurangabad station I joined an octopus of a queue for three third-class tickets.

The Partner left me alone. Here, ahead of me, stood up like logs, were several rough men, who, from their looks, seemed to be sub-men of sorts: shouting, gesticulating, spitting, and stinking. With them, I found it private enough. I read my post forwarded from Bombay. A letter was from the Vice-President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, expressing pleasure that I was in India. These letters made me realize a truth about our situation. We are *all* mad. If there is any difference between the Partner and myself, and the son-in-law and myself, it is only of degree. I imagine myself a man of reason, yet I cannot think what I am doing *here*, in India, in this third-class queue, unless it is for the plain hell of it. ♦

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THE COWPATH TO AMERICA

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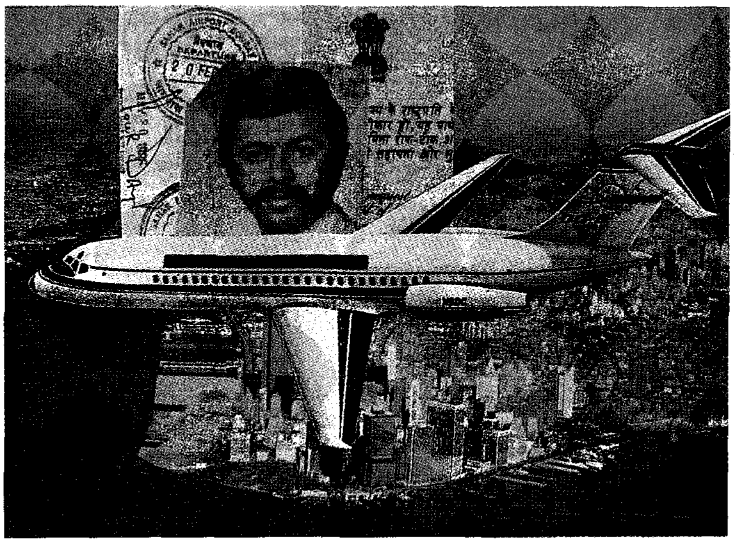
BY ABRAHAM VERGHESE



STEVEN DANA

ONE night in 1979, toward the end of my interneship at the Government General Hospital in Madras, India, I was summoned from my bed to the contagious-diseases ward, where an elderly Brahman priest with rabies needed to be sedated. He was in one of two "dog bite" rooms: well-ventilated, high-ceilinged structures with no hard furniture, a padlocked door, and wire mesh on one wall. When I admitted him, two days previously, he had been lucid but had complained of fever and a tingling around the site of a healed bite wound. Now, as I stood, with the matron, peering into the cage, he was agitated and mumbling incoherently. I fished out a needle from the tabletop sterilizer and fitted it onto a syringe. I entered his room, squatted by his mat, gently rolled him to one side, and injected pethidine (Demerol) into his gluteus muscle. A plate of puri and potatoes lay untouched next to him; water had been taken away, because the sight of it gave him pharyngeal spasms.

I thought of my father's older brother, who was ten when he chased away a dog that had strayed into the compound of the family home in Kerala, South India. When the boy turned back to the house, the dog came up behind him and bit him on the hand. The wound was treated with a poultice by an Ayurvedic physician, but within a few weeks the child developed fever and confusion. The family knew what this meant. They made preparations to take him downriver by boat and from there by car to Trivandrum and the nearest big hospital. But the little boy screamed in terror at the sight of the river; it threw him into a fit of choking. Nothing could induce him to get on the boat. He died in the house where he was born.

The night matron ushered me out. "Cent per cent fatal, Doctor," she said as she locked the door after me. Then she added, "By morning? All over."

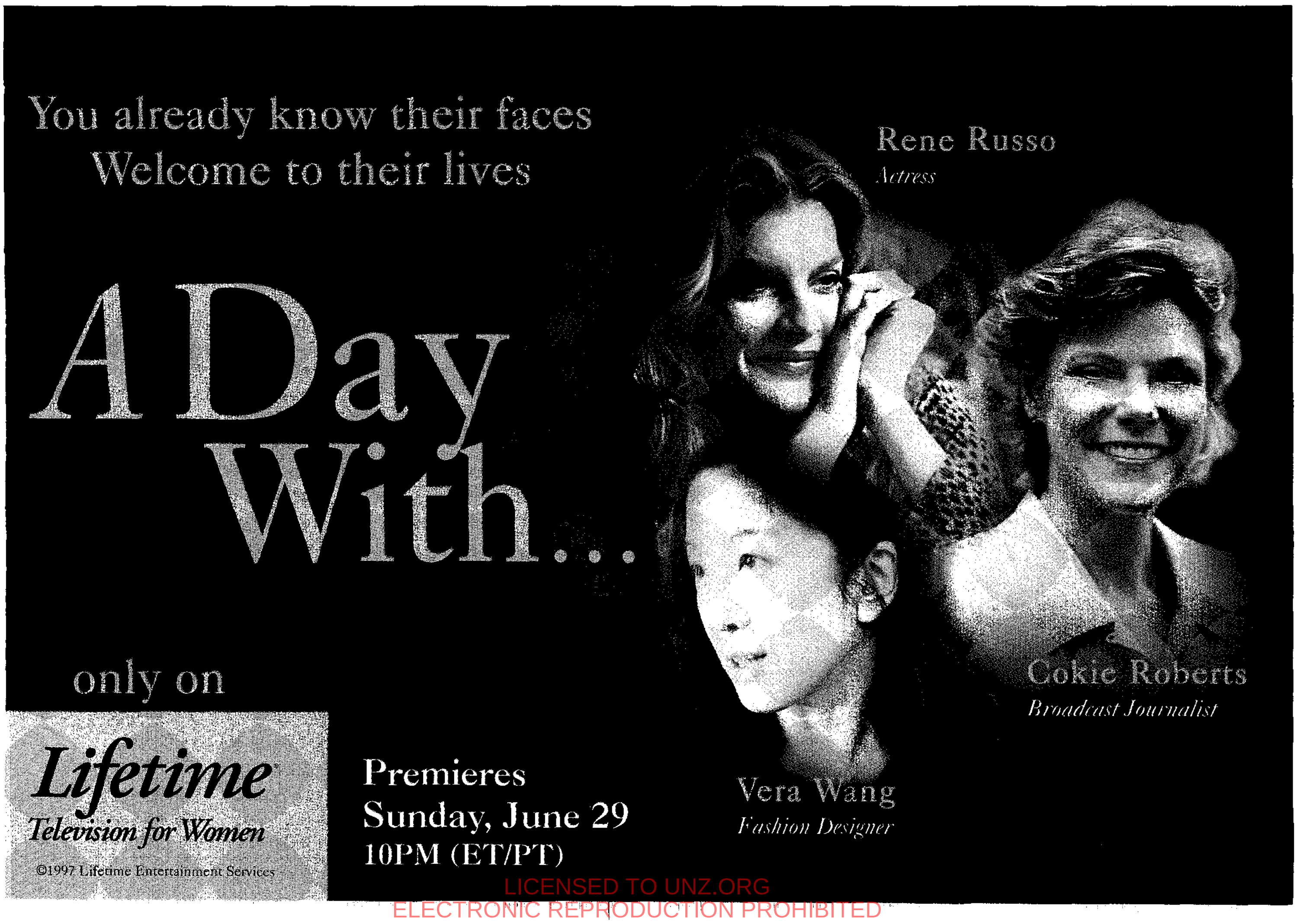
She would have laughed at my stupidity if I had told her that, according to "Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine," my American textbook, a rabid patient could survive. One patient, the book said, had been maintained for months on a respirator, in a state-of-the-art intensive-care unit, until the virus burned itself out. But then in America only a few human rabies cases occurred every year. Around twenty-five thousand people died of rabies annually in India. Our intensive-care beds were needed for people who had better chances of survival.

I walked back to my quarters, through a maze of walkways that led past the open wards. When I first entered the hospital, as a third-year medical student, the redolence of the wards had been exciting—a vindication for the years of sitting through dry lectures on anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology. My hero was Professor K. V. Thiruvengadam. During my first day on the wards, as fifteen of us students trooped behind him on rounds, we came to a patient giving off a strange smell, and it seemed to animate Professor K.V.T. He rattled off a litany of odors—the acetone breath of diabetic coma, the freshly-baked-bread odor of typhoid fever, the stale-beer stench of scrofula, the sewer breath of a lung abscess, the just-plucked-chicken-feathers emanation of rubella—before arriving at the ammoniacal, mousy odor that rose from the patient before us. "Hepatic coma," he said, and he proceeded to demonstrate all its other signs.

K.V.T. could percuss a lung and predict precisely what the chest X-ray would look like. He would quote Thackeray, *Nature*, and the most recent edition of "Harrison's." As chief of medicine, he was a busy man, but he made us feel that there was nothing more important to him than guiding our fingers to feel what he felt, and guiding our eyes and ears to see and hear what he saw and heard.

But three years after I met him—halfway through my compulsory interneship—my excitement had worn off. It had given way to a sense of impotence. Oh, yes, our hospital performed open-heart surgery; we had a giant neurosurgical institute; and we provided yeoman service in many other areas. But the demands always outstripped the resources. In the lines that wove and doubled back on themselves at the door of the outpatient clinic each morning, almost every patient would have been deserving of hospital admission by American standards. But only some were picked for admission, and then often because the patient was a good "teaching case." At exam time, professional patients would come to the hospital and receive a week's lodging and food in return for being fodder for the examinees. Takedown Govindraj, for instance, would, if you got him as your assigned case, signal to you to get your pen out. (A few rupees would have had to pass between examinee and patient before this step.) "Take down, Doctor," he'd say, adopting the tone of the many clinicians who had used his body to instruct medical students. "Take down: jaundice, spider angiomas, palmar erythema, Dupuytren's contracture, flapping tremor, breast enlargement, splenomegaly, shrunken liver, testicular atrophy." He would point to each of the stigmata of cirrhosis and pronounce the words pretty well, considering that he spoke no English. But it was best for the examinee to know this stuff on his own. Takedown occasionally sent out for mutton *biriyani*, which was more protein than his liver could handle. The mild hepatic encephalopathy that resulted would cause him to say "breast enlargement" while pointing to his balls.

THE corridor outside the operating rooms was now dark and silent. The daytime cacophony of auto rickshaws, scooters, mopeds, cars, and buses outside the hospital walls and the crush



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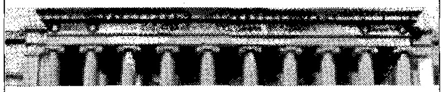

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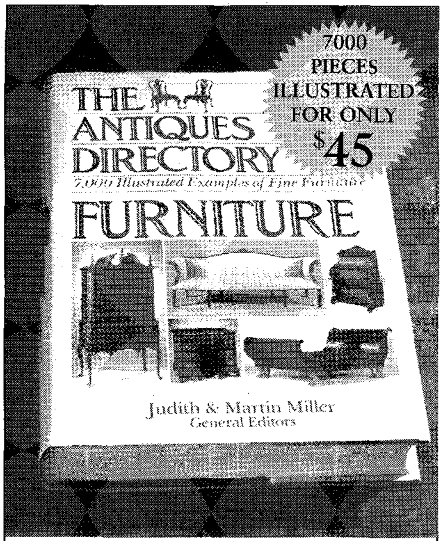
of people within had lessened. The whitewashed pillars that held up the buildings were faintly visible. It was possible, in the dim glow of the metal-caged light bulbs, to ignore the betel-juice stains and to imagine the colonial era, when British medical officers had ruled like emperors here and had trained "native" medical students, teaching them about Pott's disease and Hansen's disease and Sydenham's chorea and other white-male-eponym conditions, and instilling in them the desire to wear pith helmets and white cotton suits and own Raleigh bicycles and, one day, sail to England and bring home a cherished F.R.C.P. (Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians) or F.R.C.S. (Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons).

Once again, I calculated how many days of my interneship I had left before I could leave India. I was twenty-five and restless and I had decided to pursue specialty training in America. I had been educated in India for the most part, but was born in Ethiopia, where my expatriate-Indian parents were teachers. By the time I reached medical school, my parents had emigrated to America. My older brother had finished engineering school in Madras and was now at M.I.T., in Cambridge. My parents had filed all the necessary papers, and I had a green card. The door was open for me to leave.

Most of my friends in India had, like me, grown up speaking English in the house, thinking in English, reading first Enid Blyton's Famous Five books and then the Hardy Boys. Increasingly, by the late seventies, it seemed as if we merely had our physical existence in India; mentally, we lived in a fantasy world that was somehow removed from the dust and the traffic and the chaos outside. It often appeared to me that my friends' parents and grandparents were doing the same thing we were. Their escape was the world of "the old days," by which, strangely, they meant the British days and the era of the maharajas and princely states and the rituals of afternoon tea. Our escape was the America of "Woodstock," the documentary (which, like most things, came to India years after the actual event, but seemed to trigger its own revolution among the already Westernized kids I knew). For us, America was defined by the music of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and by the novels of John Irving and Joseph Heller. Our preference for America was also a form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of rebellion against the British fixation of our elders. England seemed to be a dead-end place, particularly for a young medical student. You could get your F.R.C.S. (Farting Round the Countryside, we called it), but you would almost never be appointed a consultant. You either stayed as a perpetual interne or took your precious F.R.C.S. back to Madras and hung up your shingle and competed with all the other " 'phoren' returned" doctors on Sterling Road.

Those of us who planned to get to America abandoned British and Indian texts, which tended to be dogmatic, imperious tomes. "Harrison's" had numerous authors, and it quoted the pivotal, and even controversial, studies—the Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis, for example—that formed the basis of modern practice. I would pick out names from the seven-page list of contributors to the seventh edition and read them aloud, enjoying the way the elegant titles rolled off my tongue and fantasizing about one day being the Hersey Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic (Medicine), Harvard Medical School.

It was possible to get an interneship as a foreign medical graduate (F.M.G.) in America. Residency programs in many inner-city American hospitals needed foreign medical graduates, and recruited them vigorously. These were institutions that rarely attracted American medical-school graduates. The hospitals' residency programs were supported by Medicare educational money, and they served an indigent patient population. The annual influx of foreign medical graduates was vital to the hospitals' functioning.

Yet while it was possible to get an American interneship, it wasn't easy. First, you had to pass a daylong examination that tested your medical knowledge, and another that tested your proficiency in English. By the end of the sixties, the exam was no longer offered in India. The closest places where the exam could be taken ended up being in Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore. It seemed to us that, through the seventies and eighties, the bar kept being raised; the exam became more specialized, with the two parts given at different times of the year. Undaunted, medical students, their heads buried in study guides, packed the twice-a-year charter planes that took off from Madras or Bombay. Fewer than fifty per cent of the students

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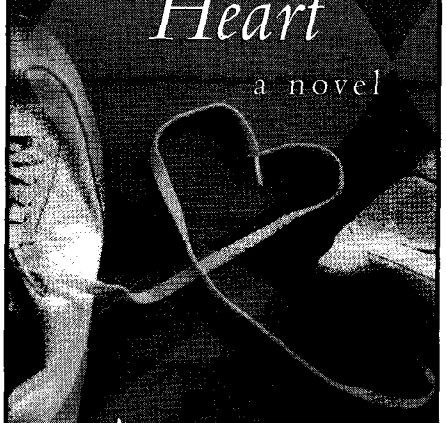

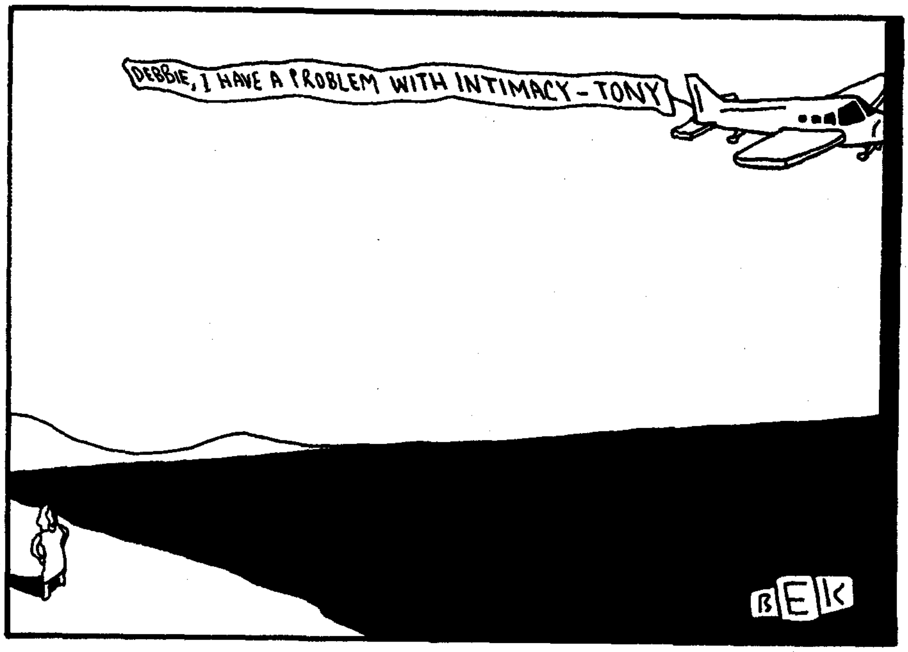
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passed the exams; a larger percentage probably lost their virginity in Bangkok or Manila.

The biggest hurdle, though, came *after* the exams, with the attempt to get a visa from the American Consulate. In the late seventies, it was exceedingly difficult for an Indian doctor to obtain a visa to go to America. But this didn't stop people who had passed the exams from trying. The main visa officer was a black gentleman who, rumor had it, hated his posting. The lines outside the Consulate would form the night before. Most people were dressed in their consulate best, but some scruffy-looking touts wearing sarongs squatted in line all night and made a good living selling their spots to late arrivals. For a fee, a pundit whose credentials were dubious—after all, if he knew how to get a visa, what was he doing in Madras?—would coach you on how to be "cent per cent successful."

From the sweltering humidity outdoors I entered the spotless, air-conditioned antechamber of the Consulate, with its United States flag, its orange carpets, and its photograph of Jimmy Carter. My visit was routine, since I had a green card. But my classmates who were applying for tourist visas or work visas needed an "interview" to prove that they planned to return to India. They carried with them surety bonds, land certificates, bank statements, and anything else that signified wealth in India, as proof that they were not going to America to *better* themselves—they were doing just fabulously in India, thank you very much. Relatives often transferred all their assets to an applicant for twenty-four hours, so that the applicant could be rich for one day. Or else "instant wealth" agencies provided papers, good only for the few hours spent in the Consulate. And, of course, despite all the pledges to return, I didn't know anyone who had any intention of coming back.

If an applicant came out of the Consulate smiling, the line outside collapsed as people mobbed the apparently successful candidate: "What did he ask? What did you say? What did he say?" Most people emerged with long faces and were shunned, as if they were contagious.

One morning, the visa officer turned down six consecutive doctors and told the seventh, who happened to be a friend of mine, and whom I'll call Vadivel, "Spare me the crap about coming back with specialized knowledge to serve your country. Why do you really want to go?" Vadivel, who had held on to his American dream for so long that he could speak with the passion of a visionary, said, "Sir, craving your indulgence, I want to train in a decent, ten-story hospital where the lifts are actually working. I want to pass board-certification exams by my own merit and not through pull or bribes. I want to become a wonderful doctor, practice real medicine, pay taxes, make a good living, drive a big car on decent roads, and eventually live in the Ansel Adams section of New Mexico and never come back to this wretched town, where

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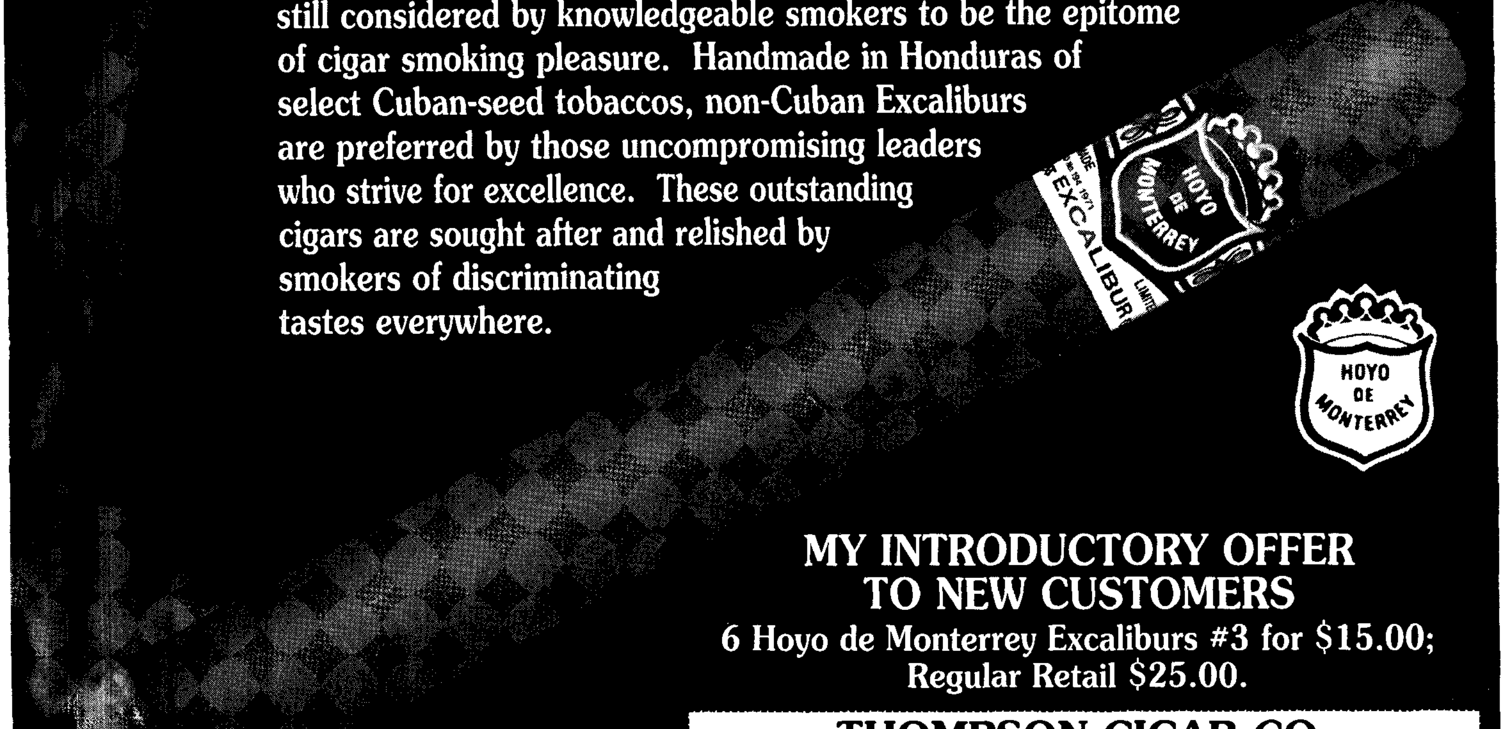

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doctors are as numerous as fleas and practice is cutthroat, and where the air outside is not even fit to breathe." The consul gave him a visa. The eighth applicant, forewarned, tried the same tactic but was turned down.

AT the entrance to the internes' quarters, which occupied the top floor of a three-story building, the peon whose full-time job was to sit by the solitary phone and log the calls from the matrons and wake up the appropriate interne was snoring. A faint odor of ganja was in the air.

A door burst open and a fellow-interne, known as Mo, stumbled out of his room, almost knocking into me. He had his left hand raised above his head, and the fingers of his right were applying pressure to the antecubital vein. I guessed that Mo had mainlined with pethidine and had come out of his room so the sea breeze could fan the flames of his rush.

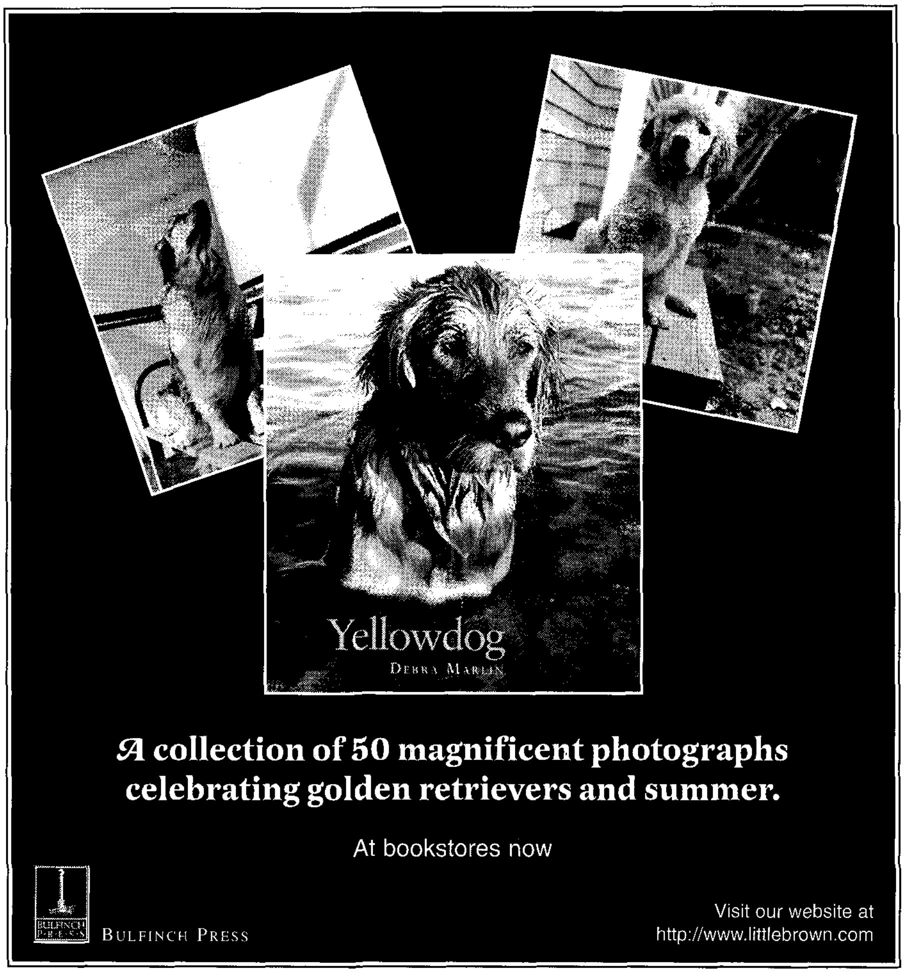
"Sorry, bugger," he said.

Mo was part of a different kind of madness from what we would-be foreign medical graduates went in for. He belonged to the peth-and-poker crowd. There was a room in the men's hostel where a poker game was reputed to have gone on day and night for three years—with politicians, lawyers, and other *dadas* coming and going, and a percentage of the kitty going to the occupant of the room. Mo, like many in his group, had been in medical school for many years, consistently failing the anatomy viva voce. He had passed and become an interne when state elections brought one of his relatives into power, giving him the necessary pull to get through.

Tonight, the pethidine had taken away the barrier that usually kept him wary of me. "Abe, you lucky bugger," he said. He lowered his arm and clamped it over my shoulder. "I wish I could go to America."

I was about to mention what many of my classmates planned to do: get a position in England or Tanzania or Nigeria or the Caribbean and from there get a visa to America, because the odds were better than in Madras. Of course, he had to study and clear the exams first.

"No, bugger," he said, anticipating my advice. "If at all I go, I'll marry a green-card holder, then live there and do Stanley Kaplan till I pass. Or maybe do business in Las Vegas or something. But,



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no, I think I'll stay here. *Desh*—motherland—that's important to me."

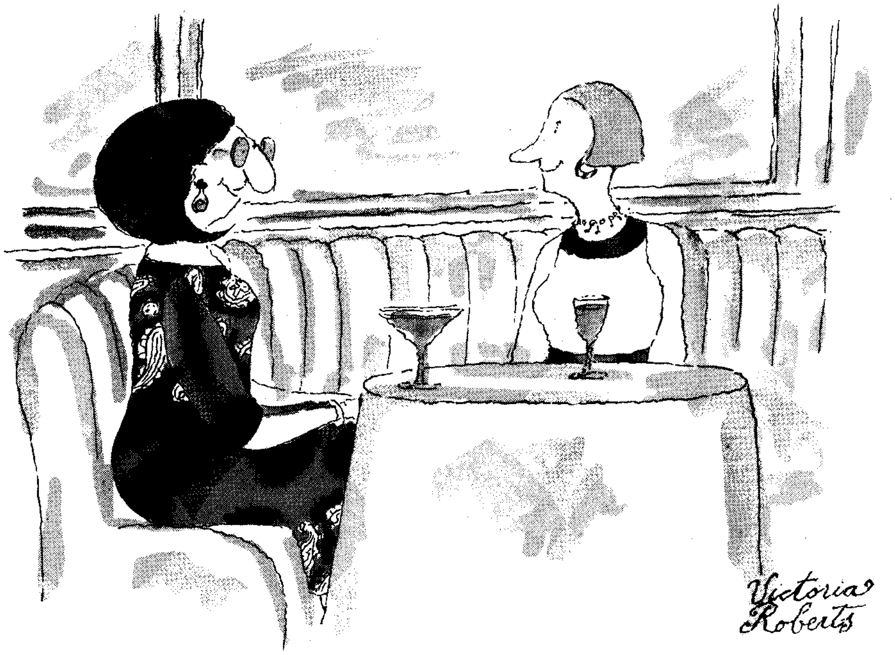
His voice took on a conspiratorial tone. "I heard that one of our buggers, when he landed at Kennedy, he met a beautiful woman—a deadly blonde—and her brother outside baggage claim. She was *very, very* friendly. They offered him a lift in a white convertible. They took him to their apartment, and then you know what the brother did? Pulled a bloody gun out and said, 'Screw my sister or I'll kill you.' Can you imagine? What a country!"

Mo's deadly-blonde fantasy was just one version of the American dream that most of us had. And Vadivel had been right when he told the consular officer that doctors abounded in India; what was lacking was money to provide meaningful treatment to people in need. America was the land where there was no dichotomy between what the textbook said you should do and what you *could* do—or so we thought. In America, your talent and hard work could take you to the very top. It was the land of defibrillators on every ward and disposable *everything*, by God—no more mucking around in the murky waters of a lukewarm sterilizer for a needle that could actually penetrate skin. As for the deadly blonde . . .

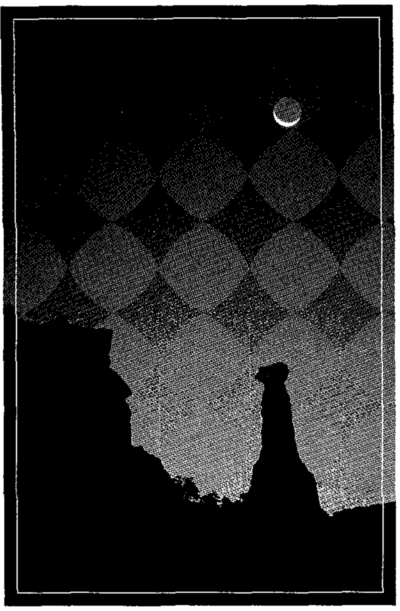
I ARRIVED in America a few months before my interneship was due to start. My graduation gift from my parents had been a fifteen-day airline ticket that allowed multiple stops around America. My mood was euphoric. On my first stop, I met a friend of a friend who was just finishing his interneship at an East Coast hospital. We slipped into the easy familiarity of expatriates. Over dinner at a Vietnamese restaurant, I told him the places I hoped to apply to.

He laughed. "Don't be so bloody naïve, bugger," he said. "Learn from the experience of others. Look." He pushed a chili-sauce bottle to the center of the table. "This, my dear friend, is an Ellis Island hospital. Mark my words, every city has one. Such a place is *completely* dependent on foreign medical graduates, and that's where you will go. No ifs and buts. Think of it as a quarantine period, before you can move on and do your land-of-opportunity fantasy. Your elders and betters have passed through these places. Why should you think you are different?"

Now he put a saltshaker as far away from the chili-sauce bottle as he could. "That," he said, "is a Plymouth Rock hospital—university- and medical-school-affiliated, of course. It has *never* taken a foreign medical graduate. Except for the occasional South African white or Brit or Australian, who—don't ask why—is a different species of foreign medical graduate from you and me. Don't even bother with that kind of place. The cowpath from India never goes through there. Unless you want



"I got married once—to avoid writing."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to take a job as a bathroom sweeper."

He could see that I resisted this argument, and my resistance irritated him. "Look here. We foreign medical graduates are an *embarrassment* to this society, a *prob-lem*," he said, waggling the index and middle fingers of both hands, as if placing quotation marks—a gesture I'd never seen in India. "We are like the Mexican-migrant-worker *prob-lem*, or the Colombian-cocaine-export *prob-lem*. Alas, we *prob-lems* wouldn't exist if the United States economy didn't depend on us, if there wasn't a great need for the commodity we provide and which they are willing to pay for. *They* create the *prob-lem*. But that doesn't mean they have to *like* us, or treat us fairly."

He signalled for the check. "We are, my dear friend, like a transplanted organ—lifesaving, and desperately needed, but rejected because we are foreign tissue. But, as they say in America, tough shit."

Contrariness made me visit a Plymouth Rock hospital in Boston. The secretary in the internal-medicine office was barely cordial. She soon ascertained what my appearance had already suggested: that I was a foreign medical graduate. I explained that, since I had never received a reply to my letter of inquiry, I thought that perhaps their letter to me had been lost in the mail. "Not likely," she said. There was a long silence.

A wiser traveller, I continued my journey across America. I discovered that the patient population at a Plymouth Rock hospital was not necessarily different from that at an Ellis Island hospital. What ultimately stigmatized an Ellis Island hospital was not its patients but its doctors. The very fact that it had become dependent on foreign medical graduates made American medical students avoid the place. At Ellis Island hospitals, I was welcomed by the secretaries in the residency offices and had interviews with program directors who were eager to sign me up. I thought that I could read their thoughts: Hmm . . . speaks well . . . not much of an accent . . . more of a British accent, if anything . . . great exam scores . . . not the never-raise-the-toilet-seat, spit-out-of-the-window type.

I applied to a new medical school—East Tennessee State University, in Johnson City, Tennessee, in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. The residency

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program was so new that it had not clearly defined itself as foreign-medical-graduate-dependent or not. I was given a contract. My fellow-internes included a couple of Americans as well as foreign medical graduates from India, the Philippines, and Haiti.

On the first day of orientation, I was nervous. But nothing about the wards, the lab, the medical library, or the intensive-care unit was unexpected. I had simply arrived in the very situation I had visualized for years. I loved the way the charts were kept, with tabs separating order sheets, progress notes, laboratory results, nurses' notes, radiological reports, and consultants' notes. A call to the medical-record department would bring two or three volumes of the patient's old chart. By studying these, one could reconstruct the waxing and waning of a disease over time. And after I discharged the patient I could follow him regularly in the outpatient clinic and add to the chronicle of his encounter with illness. I had been right about one thing in America: what you should do for a patient, you *could* do.

I was intensely aware of myself at all times. I realized that I was trying not to stand out, and would speak in a manner that was understood, even if it meant pronouncing "gastroenterology" in one slurred ejaculation, rather than "gastro-enter-ology." I asked my senior resident, John Duncan, to show me how to tie my necktie in a thinner knot than the broad seventies knot I used. I studied sociological minutiae carefully, even keeping notes in my diary on the etiquette of the cafeteria line—how queue-jumping was permissible if you were heading for the salad bar, how having money ready when you got to the cashier was appreciated, how the sawdust-tasting entity appropriately called grits was to be avoided, how biscuits and gravy were tasty but sat in your belly like bricks, and, most important, where the Tabasco sauce was kept. Tabasco provided the only way I could keep my taste buds from atrophying completely. I wanted my foreignness to be forgotten. The highest compliment I received after three months of this was paid me by a nurse: she said, "Doc, I don't know where you're from, but you're a good ole Tennessee boy in my book. Are you married?"

EACH year in Tennessee, I encountered more second-generation Indians in the medical-school classes. I was fascinated by the contrast between their looks and their manner. It was like a trick of some sort—how, when they opened their mouths, the most fluent East Tennessee patois emerged. I thought (and perhaps I was wrong) that they were so American, so assimilated, that they had a confidence, a swagger, that we first-generation immigrants would never have. The F.M.G.s jokingly, and jealously, referred to them as A.B.C.D.s: American-Born Confused Deshis.

In the third year of my medical residency, I spent my free weekends working in small emergency rooms in tiny towns tucked away in the Appalachian Mountains. The staff physicians in these little mining communities were mostly Indians, with a smattering of other foreign medical graduates. The few American doctors there were usually home-

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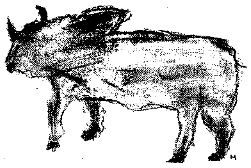
town boys who had returned after their training. I studied the Indian doctors: they represented a later stage in the life cycle of a foreign medical graduate.

One of these doctors invited me to his house. His wife and children were on vacation in India. We had a couple of beers. He seemed lonely, sinking deeper into his recliner as the evening wore on, his every sentence tinged with nostalgia. It struck me that in the privacy of his home he was more Indian than he might have been in India. If I was trying to integrate, and learn the rituals of Monday-night football and Moon Pies, cookouts and coon-hunting, squirrel stew and possum pie, this doctor had abandoned that strategy. Or else he had worked his way through that phase and arrived at this.

On the walls of his den were pictures of his family. "That's my oldest daughter," he said, pointing. "Guess what—she's been accepted by Harvard as an undergraduate. Pre-med, of course."

His face revealed more than just parental pride. He wanted her to succeed in a way that he, for all his financial success, never could. His daughter would soon penetrate the upper tier of medicine, which had been closed to him. She would step right into it, as if it were her birthright—sans accent and with an American medical degree. There was pride and vindication in his expression.

I WASN'T ready to settle in the hinterland. I wanted to make it to Plymouth Rock. My mentor in Tennessee, an infectious-disease specialist named Steven Berk, had sparked my interest in that field and encouraged me to apply for a fellowship. Once again, in 1982, I sent out applications to the best programs in the country. But this time I actually received replies.



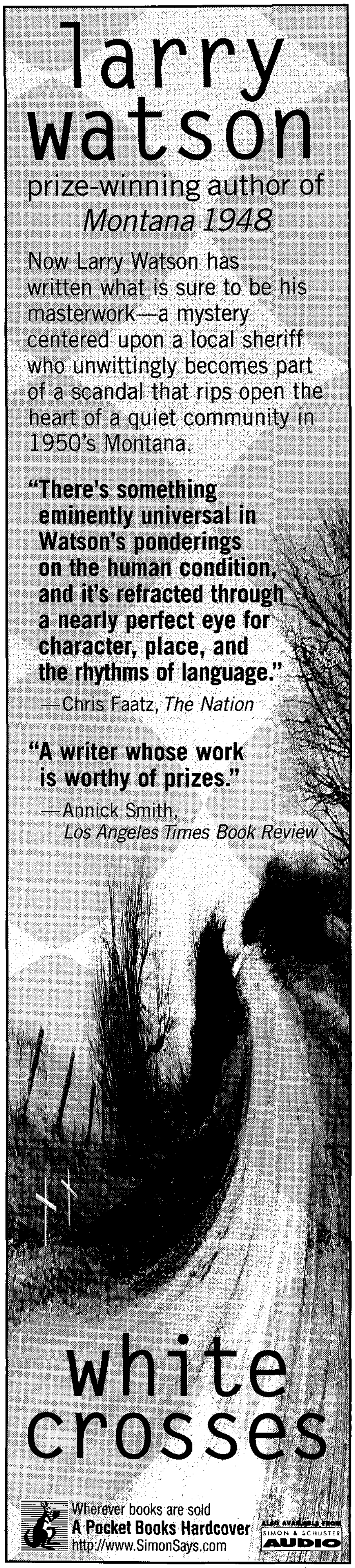
I asked myself what had changed. I had published a few papers by then, but Berk's strong letter of recommendation had helped; it said, "Look beyond the foreign-medical-graduate label." When Boston University made me a preëmptive offer of a fellowship, before the official "match" day, I accepted. I had finally penetrated the country club.

Boston was Mecca. It had three medical schools, each with years of tradition, and each owning or linked to several famous hospitals. I sat in lecture halls listening to speakers whose papers and textbook chapters I had read and who had been mythical figures to me. My fellow-trainees—all American graduates—found my propensity for hero worship amusing. Real fame in Boston that year belonged to Ray Flynn, Yo-Yo Ma, and Larry Bird.

Half of my fellowship training was spent in laboratory research, learning basic techniques. I embarked on a study of pneumonia using an animal model. The laboratory skills and the imagination required to be a first-class researcher were quite distinct from the skills demanded of a clinician. Either you had them or you didn't.

I soon noticed that in Boston, as in Tennessee, there wasn't much interest in the bedside exam. Most case discussions took place in conference rooms or labs. As a student in India, I had imagined that the ready availability of CAT scans and angiograms, the routine ability to float Swan-Ganz catheters into the heart and measure pressures, and so on, would have resulted in American doctors' becoming superb bedside sleuths. They had so many opportunities to confirm bedside findings with appropriate investigations. But instead their senses were rusty from lack of use, and there was little faith in the bedside exam.

I realized that the movers and shakers in medicine—the chairmen and the department heads with the magnificent titles—didn't get to their positions by seeing patients. Their fame and power had come from doing basic biological research, at which they were brilliant. American education, unlike didactic Indian education, encouraged innovative and original thinking, and this was where it paid off: if medicine was both art and science, no country in the world was better at the science than America. Typically, early in these doctors' careers they had explored and described an important phenomenon and written the seminal paper on it. They had then spent years refining that observation and assigning Younger Turks to pursue the spinoffs, all the while broadening their sphere of influence, writing textbook chapters on the subject, sitting on the National Institutes of Health and Veterans Administration committees that awarded funding. The necessary skills for such a rise were busi-



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ness acumen, Machiavellian cunning, and skill in the thrust-and-parry action of committees. And all the while the research ship had to be kept afloat. If you were looking for an outstanding clinician, someone whom other doctors would seek if they were ill, it was unlikely that you would find one in a position of power.

One of the professors I admired the most was a superb clinician and a gifted researcher. He let me run the clinical service without much interference. I presented the new consultations to him every afternoon, in his lab. Almost never did I present a patient with a condition that he hadn't seen before. On one occasion, I surprised him by something I'd said.

"That's just not possible, Abe," he said. "It can't be." He wanted to see the patient. Our entourage marched over to the hospital. The professor, wrapped up in his thoughts, extended his hand. The patient, thinking that this meant a handshake, extended hers. But the professor's fingers had already slipped past the outstretched hand to grab the bedsheet and expose the part of the body in question, to see for himself what it was that seemed to defy his knowledge of how this particular disease worked. He showed us what we had missed—a finding that we thought was trivial but that was, in fact, crucial. He marched out, satisfied, having proved what it was that he had come to prove: that the rules of how infections behaved had not been broken. He left us to explain to the astonished patient that she had just received the opinion of the top infectious-disease expert in America.

I began to understand that if I still aspired to one of the heady titles that I had fantasized about as a student my life would have to take a path I hadn't anticipated. After two years, my research had barely begun to yield results. It would take several more years of committed laboratory apprenticeship before I could start exploring the research questions that really interested me. I had gone into medicine partly because middle-class Indian parents guided their children into either engineering or medicine, as if there were no other careers. But I had also chosen medicine because of Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage," a book that when I was thirteen made medicine seem the most romantic of professions: "humanity there in the rough, the materials the artist worked on," in Maugham's words. In medical school Professor K.V.T. had embodied this approach to medicine for me. I was reluctant now to change paths. I had started to resent the time I was spending away from my patients. A new disease, AIDS, had emerged. While researchers chased after its cause, there was plenty of opportunity for a clinician to observe its manifestations at the bedside. I wanted to combine patient care and teaching with more modest research.

I had made the passage from India to Plymouth Rock. But there I discovered that one of the most important things America had to offer was the *choice* of how one could live and work.

AFTER finishing my fellowship, in 1985, I went back to India. It was a nostalgic visit to see friends and relatives; my return ticket was safely in my pocket. Nevertheless, I wanted to find out whether India would feel different. I had a fleeting fantasy that I might discover a way of using my specialty in infectious diseases within India.

I carried with me an old but functioning gastroscope donated by a physician in Tennessee; I was to deliver it to a Methodist mission hospital in the state of Karnataka which was supported by an American congregation. But the customs officers in Bombay wouldn't release the gastroscope; they were convinced that I wanted to sell it. At the time, India had huge taxes on most imported items. I argued to no avail. The gastroscope never left customs and is probably still sitting there. I visited the isolated rural mission hospital anyway. The senior doctor, an ophthalmologist, had given his best years to the hospital. He was dedicated but poorly paid. His strong religious belief—something I lacked—was what kept him there. In the same hospital, I met a young anesthetist and his obstetrician wife, both fresh out of training. I thought that they were wonderful, compassionate physicians. But as their child neared school age they worried about the lack of good schools in the village. Their pay was insufficient to buy even the simplest luxuries that India's huge middle class took for granted. I couldn't see them staying there for more than another

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Inspired by the season's bounty, chefs outdo themselves at this time of year, transforming fresh ingredients into delicious meals. On lazy, hazy days, at many restaurants you can enjoy the sultry climate along with the cuisine: Private courtyards, sun-dappled gardens, and sidewalk cafés provide a respite along with a repast. In this issue, we revisit some of our favorite restaurants to check up on their special lunch and brunch menus, alfresco dining, and light summer fare.

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TASTE OF NEW YORK

The VISA® Preferred Guide to Summer Dining

ALISON ON DOMINICK STREET • 38 Dominick Street • 212-727-1188 Getting to Alison on Dominick Street may require reciting the following mantra to a cabdriver: "One block south of Spring, one block north of the Tunnel, between Hudson and Varick." It's worth memorizing, though, in order to savor chef Daniel Silverman's specialties, which currently evoke the wakening earth and flowing waters. Or, as one waitress puts it, "As things pop out of the ground, they show up on our menu." Among his seasonal delights is shad roe with a fricassee of lardoons, potato, and sorrel in a balsamic brown butter sauce. End your meal with refreshing green apple, apricot, guava, papaya, or Rhone red wine sorbet.

AUREOLE • 34 East 61st Street • 212-319-1660 Your table awaits in the Inner Sanctum, Aureole's recently remodeled courtyard garden. One of New York's most tranquil retreats by day turns magical at dusk when candle lanterns begin to softly glow. Surrounded by fragrant hibiscus, climbing ivy on white trellises, a gurgling water fountain, and statuary, diners are soothed by the serene surroundings, sophisticated presentation, and professional staff. From Charlie Palmer's progressive American menu, select the crisp red snapper with saffron-stewed Manila clams, accompanied by sweet corn and new potatoes. For dessert, choose the cool caramel mousse with cinnamon-basted fruits...and go happily sated into the summer night.

CAPSOUTO FRÈRES • 451 Washington Street • 212-966-4900 Saturday brunch at Capsouto Frères makes an ideal start to a day of SoHo shopping. Sundays, it's more of a family affair, although solo diners are made to feel welcome by the Capsouto clan. Serving from noon to 3:30 P.M., the restaurant offers à la carte breakfast items, such as eggs Benedict with salmon or Canadian bacon, as well as lunch fare. While they remain in season, soft-shelled crabs meunière or almandine tempt from the menu. Those who won't be summering in the south of France may find the salade niçoise, ratatouille omelette, and artichoke ragout savory substitutes.

FELIDIA • 243 East 58th Street • 212-758-1479 The doyenne of Italian restaurateurs, Lidia Bastianich believes that good ingredients are half of good cooking; in summer, she selects the season's best for Felidia's Northern Italian menu. Seafood lovers will find many tantalizing choices inside this cozy, converted brownstone. Every day there's a different species of whole grilled fish prepared with vegetables as a special. Those who crave perfectly cooked and seasoned homemade pasta will find her pasutice all'Istriana (diamond shapes in a light seafood and tomato sauce) a midsummer night's dream. Linguine with clams is also heavenly. To complement the cuisine, indulge in a prized Italian vintage from the vast wine cellar.

HUDSON RIVER CLUB • 4 World Financial Center • 212-786-1500 You can tell a good restaurant by its bread; when it comes to the table fragrant and steaming, with a thick crust that gives way to a soft and scrumptious sourdough center, you're in for a fine meal. Even if the Hudson River Club didn't offer a commanding view of the river, it would be worth a visit. Chef Jim Porteus' summer starters include creamy blue crab and scallop bisque, vegetable terrine of Hudson Valley foie gras, and sea scallops on a rosemary branch skewer. You may be tempted to simply order appetizers to save room for the desserts—as rich and beautifully presented as any in New York.

INAGIKU • 111 East 49th Street • 212-355-0440 Lunch can be surprisingly affordable at sleek Inagiku in the Waldorf=Astoria. At its handsome and convivial Shabu-Shabu bar—a comfortable place to dine alone or with companions—a seventeen dollar lunch is served

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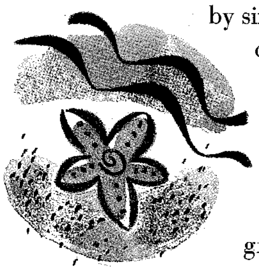
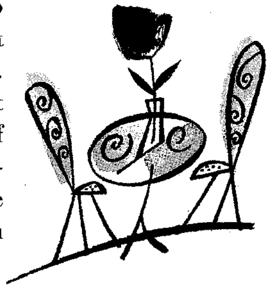
Monday through Friday. Patrons choose among four options: the bento box of traditional dishes, a platter of assorted sushi and cut rolls, shrimp and vegetable tempura, or thinly sliced beef with vegetables (which diners cook in a broth at the bar). This midtown oasis of calm also offers a selection of light, refreshing cocktails, including a melon daiquiri and Wasabi Mary, which draws its firepower from the wasabi root and adds panache with a daikon stalk. For a special occasion, book one of the restaurant's private tatami rooms.

I TRULLI • 122 East 27th Street • 212-481-7372 If fashion and style in the nineties are characterized by simple elegance, I Trulli is their culinary counterpart. With no excess of spices, ingredient overkill, or contrived presentations, I Trulli delivers tasty, authentic food from Italy's Apulian region. A full dinner includes assorted antipasti, a plate of tender grilled baby cuttlefish and octopus, homemade pasta, baked fish, and fruit and cheese for dessert. Warm and rustic inside, the restaurant alsofeatures an outdoor dining area sheltered from the elements and decorated with soothing frescoes of the Adriatic. I Trulli serves Italian wines exclusively, and the staff's knowledgeable recommendations are affordable and worthy of consideration.

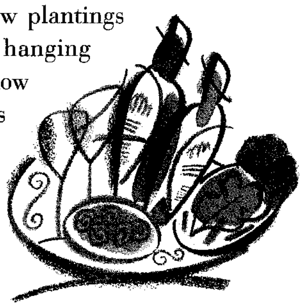


LAYLA • 211 West Broadway • 212-431-0700 Watch the passing parade on West Broadway from Layla's festive patio, sipping a Moroccan margarita made with fresh pomegranate juice. Across from the handsomely redesigned Franklin Street subway station, this innovative Middle Eastern restaurant has just the menu to satisfy diners on sultry nights. One healthy choice is a vine-ripened tomato stuffed with shrimp escebeche and citrus-marinated vegetables. Chef Joseph Fortunato's Moroccan shepherd's pie, with cinnamon-braised lamb and a mushroom-chickpea ragout topping, is also surprisingly light. Should you find yourself in SoHo at lunchtime, take advantage of Layla's weekday $19.97 three-course lunch that provides a choice of soup or field-green salad, an entrée, and dessert.

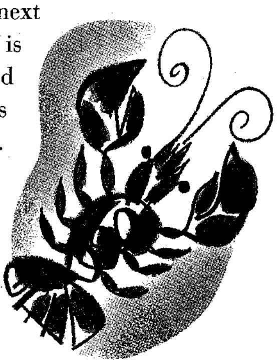


LE MADRI • 168 West 18th Street • 212-727-8022 Le Madri makes a fine summer refuge for those who can't spend the weekend in the Hamptons. The outdoor patio, landscaped with trees and flowers and covered with a green-and-white striped awning, holds a handful of tables set with Frette linen and small votive candles. Inside, ceiling fans whir silently overhead, as waiters carry chef Angelo Sessa's Tuscan-style treats out to the wooden deck. Insalatina primaverile combines pears, endive, grapes, walnuts, and Roquefort cheese with a walnut oil vinaigrette. Osso buco is served Milanese style, with a lemon and zucchini risotto. For dessert, linger over the roasted berry soup with frosty Prosecco granita.

MARCH • 405 East 58th Street • 212-754-6272 The ultimate spot for romance, March has reopened its canopied garden for alfresco dining. New plantings include hydrangeas, begonias, fuchsia hanging baskets, and herbs for the kitchen. And now that chef/co-owner Wayne Nish has introduced two new, four-course, dual tasting menus for summer, couples can order separate but complementary meals paired with wines chosen by wine director/co-owner Joseph Scalice. For example, while one enjoys a second course of salmon layered with sea scallops and black truffles, the other can savor a fricassee of young vegetables in tomato consommé with black truffles. To keep the relationship amicable, be certain to offer some to your partner to taste.



OCEANA • 55 East 54th Street • 212-759-5941 Seafood is simply sublime at Oceana, and executive chef Rick Moonen makes the most of the ocean's seasonal largesse. Fresh day-boat fish such as halibut, scallops, and grouper are caught and delivered to the restaurant the next day. Tuna from Maine and Massachusetts is transformed into carpaccio appetizers and grilled steaks. Come July, wild striped bass from Long Island Sound joins the menu. What makes the dishes so interesting are Moonen's sauces, some delicate and elegant, others rich and dramatic. For guaranteed gourmet bliss, try the seared Maine diver sea scallops with roe or the grilled baby octopus with rouget.



ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA • 17 Barrow Street • 212-228-0822 This Greenwich Village restaurant, where many romantics have come to celebrate over the years, marks its own twenty-fifth anniversary this month. Lavish floral arrangements, lilting piano music, and the view of a rose garden in bloom (illuminated at night with twinkling lights) are all part of the seduction. Chef David McInerney, back after a two-year sabbatical, reapplies his continental touch to American staples. Start with the jumbo lump crab cakes with a sweet corn sauce or the honey-grilled quail

(continued on next page)

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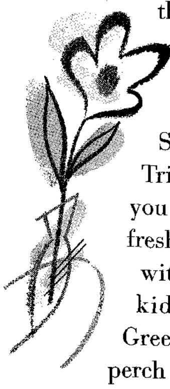
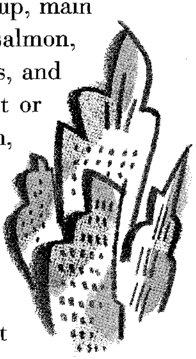
with warm onion confit and baby arugula salad. One if By Land's signature entrées include individual beef Wellington and an especially fine rack of lamb.

TONY MAY'S SAN DOMENICO • 240 Central Park South • 212-265-5959 The virtues of a balanced Mediterranean diet—nutritious, low in calories, and appealing to the eye—are well known. Pentapiatto (a five-course lunch) at San Domenico takes it one step further. Small portions of complementary items are presented on a single large plate for $19.97 year-round. A typical serving, prepared by chef Odette Fada, includes tastes of salad, handmade pasta, meat, vegetables, and berries. Even on languid summer days, those who choose pentapiatto will feel energized, rather than drowsy, at the end of their meal. The restaurant also offers special pretheater meals and a dinner tasting menu that includes wines.

TRIBECA GRILL • 375 Greenwich Street • 212-941-3900 While there's no guarantee you'll see Ralph Fiennes or Juliette Binoche of "The English Patient" brunching at the next table, the Miramax Pictures headquarters is right above the Tribeca Grill...and Sean Connery was spied dining here just a few weeks ago. Along with the chance to rub shoulders with Academy Award-winners, patrons value this spot for the Sunday brunch. Owner Drew Nieporent's TriBakery supplies the pastry and muffins, and you can also start the day with a ratatouille and fresh basil frittata or banana-stuffed French toast with apple-wood smoked bacon. There's also a kids' menu available, and outdoor seating on Greenwich Street provides the best celeb-spotting perch in town.



TSE YANG • 34 East 51st Street • 212-688-5447 Whether you want to celebrate a summer wedding, graduation, or even a successful week in the stock market, Tse Yang's elegant setting, sweet and spicy menu, dedicated staff, and award-winning wine list can help you to commemorate life's accomplishments. Private dining rooms in this upscale Chinese restaurant accommodate up to sixty people. Sea bass, served either steamed or crispy, is an especially light and satisfying entrée. The affordable, prix fixe lunch includes a choice of appetizer or soup, main course, and dessert. Start with the smoked salmon, followed by the shrimp with straw mushrooms, and top it off with a refreshing serving of sorbet or fresh fruit. And to make any visit a celebration, end it with a cigar from the Davidoff grand reserve humidor.



WINDOWS ON THE WORLD • One World Trade Center • 107th Floor • 212-524-7000 The views alone are worth making a night of it at Windows on the World, and now the restaurant gives guests two more reasons to make it an extended evening: Come between 5 P.M. and 6 P.M. to enjoy the three-course, prix fixe sunset menu (the light Moroccan stew known as tagine is one warm-weather favorite), and watch the city change tempo below. To work off the "chocolate delirium" dessert, adjourn to the adjacent Greatest Bar on Earth and dance: Wednesdays, lounge bands alternate sets with a live d.j. Rhythm and blues as well as jazz bands are featured on Thursday and Friday nights, and Saturday is reserved for swing.

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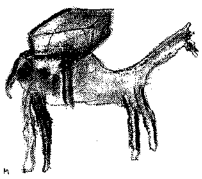
year or so. I couldn't see myself working there, either.

On a subsequent visit, four years later, I noted a new phenomenon sweeping Madras and other cities in India: N.R.I. hospitals. These were nonresident-Indian hospitals, set up by Indian doctors living abroad who invested their foreign exchange in hospitals modelled on their counterparts in the West, right down to the modular furniture in the foyers. These hospitals offered everything from renal transplants to coronary-bypass surgery. But they were expensive and catered to the rich. The very rich, however, still went to Manhattan's Sloan-Kettering or the Texas Heart Institute.

I made rounds at one of these hospitals for two weeks. I gave a formal lecture. And I tried to imagine myself living and working in this setting, but I couldn't. I made excuses for myself on the plane returning to America. "No one knows what to do with your specialty in India," I told myself. "Most physicians manage the infections they encounter without outside assistance, and they're not about to change to help you make a living. And, as for AIDS, Abe, they seem to think that it is and will remain an American problem. Money is the missing ingredient in India, not you. You're just not needed, Abe. If a new enlightened government ever comes along . . ." I never completely convinced myself.

MY academic career, spent largely in smaller medical schools where patient care was valued more than research, brought me, eventually, to America's southernmost border—to a professorship at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, in El Paso, and to a consultancy at R. E. Thomason Hospital, a county hospital. For the first time in America, I felt as if I had disappeared. I no longer stood out. The patients and their families walking the corridors of the county hospital looked like my kin from South India. They shared my skin color and took *me* to be Hispanic. When I was stopped in the corridors and asked questions in Spanish, I learned to respond with answers such as "*La cafetería es en el basement*"—border Spanglish, allowing one the liberty of throwing in English when nothing else could do the job. A sizable percentage of our patients were Mexican nationals. The hospital required only an El Paso billing address to provide service. As the sole not-for-profit hospital serving a population of almost seven hundred thousand, well over a third of whom were uninsured, we were overburdened and understaffed. But you'd have known this only if you read it somewhere. The wards were airy, and sunlight from big picture windows flooded the corridors, reflecting off the waxed floors and pale-blue walls of the internal-medicine ward. The security guards directed you to the choice *caldo de res* and *barbacoa* joints on Alameda Avenue; the nurses smiled, and if they felt embattled they didn't show it. As a doctor interested in infectious diseases, I had found a perfect niche in El Paso: treating Third World diseases—typhoid, amoebic liver abscesses, brucellosis—in a First World setting.



IN 1993, I found myself in the South of India again, this time at the Oberoi Hotel in Bangalore, and I was having a strange conversation with the bellman. The annual struggle to fill our interneship slots at Texas Tech had become desperate. Despite the fact that our medical students loved the experience at the county hospital, they had no intention of staying with us as internes. We had always been dependent on foreign medical graduates, and it appeared that we always would be. But visas for foreign medical graduates, which seemed to have been easier to obtain at the peak of the AIDS epidemic, were once again difficult to get. A new twist had been added: to have a chance for a visa, you had to have a contract with a residency program in America.

I had come to India to interview potential internes, pick the best, and hand out five contracts. These five graduates, contract in hand, would have a decent chance of getting their visas. Before I left El Paso, I had run a small ad in an Indian newspaper, specifying a very high score on the equivalency exam. I thought that I would get ten or twenty applicants. Four hundred people answered the advertisement, all of them meeting or exceeding the qualifications and overwhelming the fax machine in El Paso. I had picked seventy people to interview in Bangalore.

The bellman at the Oberoi was a bright young man, and it didn't surprise me when he told me he had a college de-

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gree. He hoped to rise in the catering field, he said. It had good prospects overseas.

"There have been many people inquiring about you, sir. Starting three days ago," the bellman said.

"What do they want to know?"

"How you look. Whether you seem strict or not." He grinned.

"What else?"

"Just silly people . . ."

"Tell me."

"One fellow asked . . . I'm ashamed to tell you."

"Go ahead."

"He asked whether you are susceptible to . . ."

"To what?"

" 'Monetary adjustments'—his exact words, sir, I swear."

"Well, I'm not. Spread the word."

"If you don't mind my suggesting, sir, leave a list with our telephone operator of people whose calls you want put through. She will not connect other calls." I must have looked puzzled, because he went on to say, "Otherwise, ministers and what-not will be bothering you all night."

The lobby of the hotel the next morning looked like a variant of the Consulate scene. Even though I had given each person a specific time to appear over the next two days, it looked as if they were *all* there.

The hotel made its business suite available to me, and I began to work my way through the applicants. The secretary assisting me told me that people I had finished interviewing were being mobbed outside. "What did he ask? What did you say?" My questions were designed simply to get to know the candidates and to pick out the brightest, smartest ones. But now, as an experiment, I began deliberately throwing in specific questions, such as "How do you feel about Clinton?" and "What are your views on homosexuality?" By the afternoon, I was getting polished but totally noncommittal answers to these questions, since nobody had any idea what my views were.

I asked one young man why he wanted to leave.

"I want to specialize in hematology oncology and then return to serve—"

"Save that for the Consulate. Really, why do you want to leave?"

He was startled. After a moment's silence, his face broke out into a naughty smile.

"*You* know, sir," he said. I did, but I wanted to hear anyway. Reluctantly, almost ashamed, he went on, "It's just hopeless—that's all I can tell you, sir. No jobs. And to get into specialty training here requires influence. And there are so many medical schools now that having a specialty degree here means less and less. And if you join government service, without some political pull you will be posted to some godforsaken place forever. And to set up a private practice—it's cutthroat, sir. Unless you have a rich father-in-law who builds a hospital for you."

According to him, yet another wrinkle had been added to the protocol of leaving: you had to have an N.O.C.—a no-objection certificate—which showed that India didn't mind your decamping. This seemed to me to be a brilliant obstacle set up by the Indian government to plug the brain drain. "But," he reassured me quickly, "N.O.C.s are no problem. They are easily obtained by lubricating the right person in Delhi."

I asked him why it was that all those I had interviewed so far claimed to want to pursue hematology oncology after their residency in internal medicine.

"It's because that's the only category of subspecialty training not readily available in India, sir. Therefore, technically, an N.O.C. can be issued. That's why we say that to you, sir." He had dropped all pretense now. He was giving me the inside story. "Everyone tells the consular officer that he wants to return and start a bone-marrow-transplant center in India. The consular officer said to someone the other day that if everyone who *said* that actually came back India would have more bone-marrow-transplant centers than *chai* shops."

By the evening of the second day, I had my five candidates. I was exhausted. The gruelling process of talking to so many young doctors, and hearing why they wanted to leave, had given me a sense of being immensely fortunate—fortunate that my parents had emigrated, fortunate that I had got the residency in Tennessee, fortunate in my choice of specialty.

My journey to America had brought me full circle, back to India, and to a situation where I could pick others to make the voyage. The best I could do for the five doctors I had picked was to bring them to a county hospital like mine: Ellis Island. The rest was up to them. ◆

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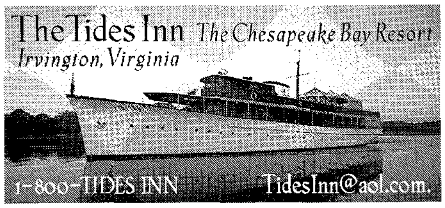

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What's so wrong with doing nothing? No work, no career, no ambition—just full-time, luxuriant laziness.

BY KIRAN DESAI

THE day that Sampath Chawla moved into a guava tree, his family—father, mother, grandmother, and sister Pinky—took up residence outside the local police station of the small town of Shahkot. They sat on the bench beneath the station's prize yellow rose creeper and waited for news. That is, the three women sat on the bench while Mr. Chawla walked around and around the building, making the policemen dizzy by shouting through every window he passed during his revolutions. If he himself were the police chief, he said, Sampath would be right this minute ensconced in his usual vegetable-like stupor among them.

"How is it you cannot find my son?" he shouted. Surely he had suffered quite enough already where Sampath was concerned. Look at how badly he had turned out! At school, he succeeded only at failing more reliably than anyone else. And then, instead of pulling up his socks and working hard at the job Mr. Chawla begged for him at the post office, he had gotten himself fired for his incompetence. "How could you do that?" his father had said. "You have done it on purpose so now you can spend all your time doing nothing." But Sampath had merely looked at him with a blank and hopeless expression. No doubt he would spend the rest of his days drooping about the house and dreaming in the tea stalls, or singing to himself in the public gardens. If they managed to find him again, that is. "You must find my son!" he shouted at the police chief.

The town made the most of the drama. Neighbors came by regularly for news, and everyone called out their support on their way back and forth from the marketplace. In some places there are people of quiet disposition and few words. But around Shahkot this was the very rare exception.

For one awful day it seemed as if Sampath had vanished forever. But the next morning the watchman of the university research forest, who had bicycled into town to bring his married sister some curd, also brought the news that beyond the compound of the retired district judge a strange man had climbed a tree and not come back down. Nobody knew why. The man, he said, would answer no questions.

"If someone in this country is crazy enough to climb up a tree, you can be sure it is Sampath," said Mr. Chawla. "There is no doubting the matter."

Holding hands, the family ran together to the bus stop, their rubber slippers slapping against their heels. They caught the same bus Sampath had taken the day before, when who knows what compulsion had driven him far from his home up into the guava tree. Here, in the place where he had taken up residence, the Chawlas made their way down the crisscross of little paths leading into an old orchard that had once borne enough fruit for it to be shipped and sold in New Delhi. But the orchard had been abandoned long ago, the fruit turning sour and the branches growing into each other, and was used now only by an occasional goatherd grazing his flock.

Searching for Sampath, the family clacked about the trees and shouted up into the leaves, the three women uttering his name with mournful wails, Mr. Chawla shouting like an Army major. At last, at the far corner of the farthest guava grove, right near the crumbling wall that bordered the forest, they discovered Sampath, sitting in his tree, his legs dangling beneath him. He had been watching their efforts with some alarm.

What on earth was he to say? He imagined himself declaring, "I am happy over here." Or asking, in a surprised fashion, "But why have you come to visit me?" He could answer their accusations with a defiant "But for some people it is normal to sit in trees." Or, serene with newfound dignity, he could say, "I am adopting a simple way of life. From now on I have no relatives." However, he did not like the thought of hurting anyone's feelings.

In the end, as it happened, he said nothing at all.

"What are you doing up there?" shouted Mr. Chawla. "Get down at once!" Sampath looked sturdily into the leafy world about him, trying to steady his wildly fluttering heart. He concentrated on the way the breeze ran over the foliage the way a hand runs over an animal's dark fur to expose a silvery underside.

Pinky felt a sudden surge of

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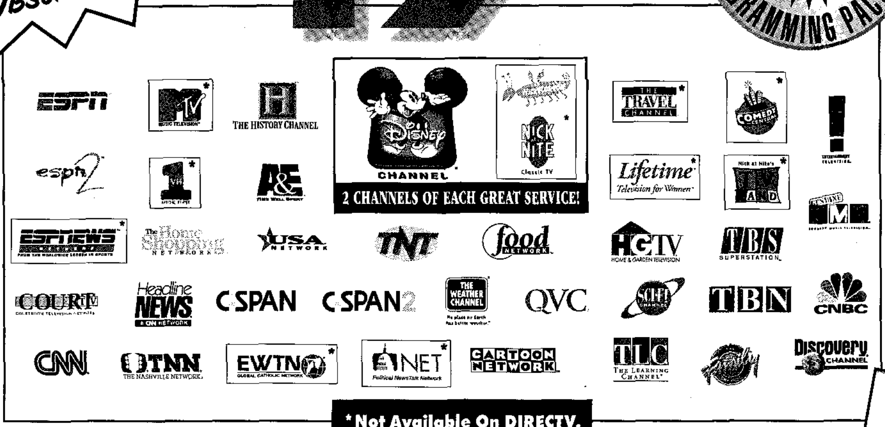

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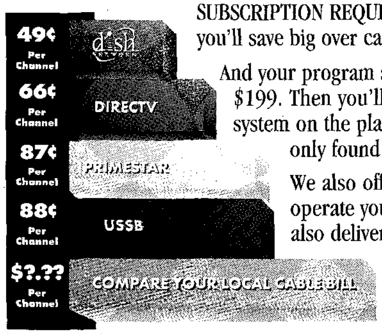

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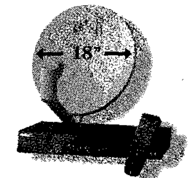

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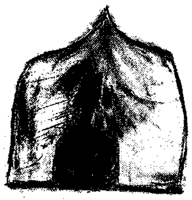
embarrassment for her brother. "Get out of the tree—the whole family is being shamed," she said bitterly.

His grandmother exclaimed, "Come down, Sampath, please. You are going to fall sick up there. Look at his thin yellow face! We had better go for the doctor."

Still he was silent.

Looking at her son, Mrs. Chawla felt her girlhood come rushing back to her, engulfing her in the memory of a time when a desperation she had sometimes felt rose and surrounded her like an enormous wall. "Let him be," she said.



"Let him be!" said Mr. Chawla. "Do families allow their sons to climb up trees? You are the Number One most strange mother in the world. Your son leaves home and climbs up a tree and you say, 'Let him be.' With you as his mother no wonder he has turned out like this. How can I keep normality within this family? I take it as a full-time job and yet it defies possibility. We must formulate a plan. Only monkeys climb up trees."

Sampath clutched at the branch he was sitting on and held on tight.

Monkeys climbed trees. Beetles lived in trees. Ants crawled up and down them. Birds sat in them. People used them for fruit and firewood, and underneath them they made each other's acquaintance in the few months between the time they got married and the time the babies arrived. But for someone to travel a considerable distance just to sit in a tree was preposterous. For that person to be sitting there a few days later was more preposterous still.

In desperation, the family called upon Dr. Banerjee, from the clinic in the bazaar, and, an energetic man, he arrived at once to view his patient. He had a mustache and round glasses and a degree from the medical school in Ranchi. "Come down!" he shouted good-humoredly. "How do you expect me to examine you while you're sitting up in a tree?"

But, oh no, Sampath was no fool. He would not climb down to be caught and—who knows!—be put into a cage and driven off to the insane asylum on Alipur Road like the madman who had interrupted the ladies' home-economics class in the university and been lured and trapped by a single sweet. So, at the family's pleading, Dr. Banerjee, who prided himself on being a good sport, hoisted himself into the tree, stethoscope and blood-pressure pump about his neck. He climbed all the way up to Sampath so he could look into his eyes and ears, check his tongue, listen to his heart, take his blood pressure, and hit his knee with an expertly aimed karatelike move of his hand. Then he climbed down and got back into the scooter rickshaw he had arrived in. "He is a crazy person," he said, beaming, the mirth of the entire situation too much for him. "Nobody except for God can do anything about that." And he disappeared back into town.

The family went to see the doctor of Tibetan medicine who had been recommended by their neighbor Lakshmiji. "A variety of cures may be prescribed," he said. "For example, medicines derived from the scorpion, the sea scorpion, the sea dragon, and the sea mouse."

"What sea mouse? There is no such thing as sea mouse!" shouted Mr. Chawla, and he dragged the family from the dark little clinic to the homeopathic and Ayurvedic doctors, and then to the naturopath who lived all the way in Kajuwala.

Dutifully, they pounded pellets into powders, brewed teas, and counted out the homeopathic pills that looked and smelled promising but wrought none of the miraculous changes they had been assured of.

Finally, they visited the holy man who lived outside the tea stall near the deer park. "Sorry to disturb you. Our son is afflicted."

"How is he afflicted?"

"He is suffering from madness."

"Is he shouting?"

"No."

"Having fits?"

"No."

"Is he tearing his hair out?"

"No."

"Is he biting his neighbors? Biting himself? Is he sleepwalking? Does he stick out his tongue and roll his eyes? Is he rude to strangers?"

"No. He eats and sleeps and takes good care of his hair. He doesn't shout and he doesn't bite himself. He has never been rude to strangers."

"Then he is not mad."

"But he is sitting up in a tree!"

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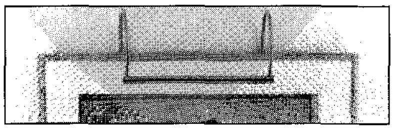

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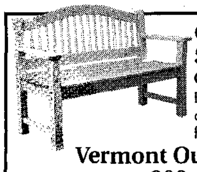

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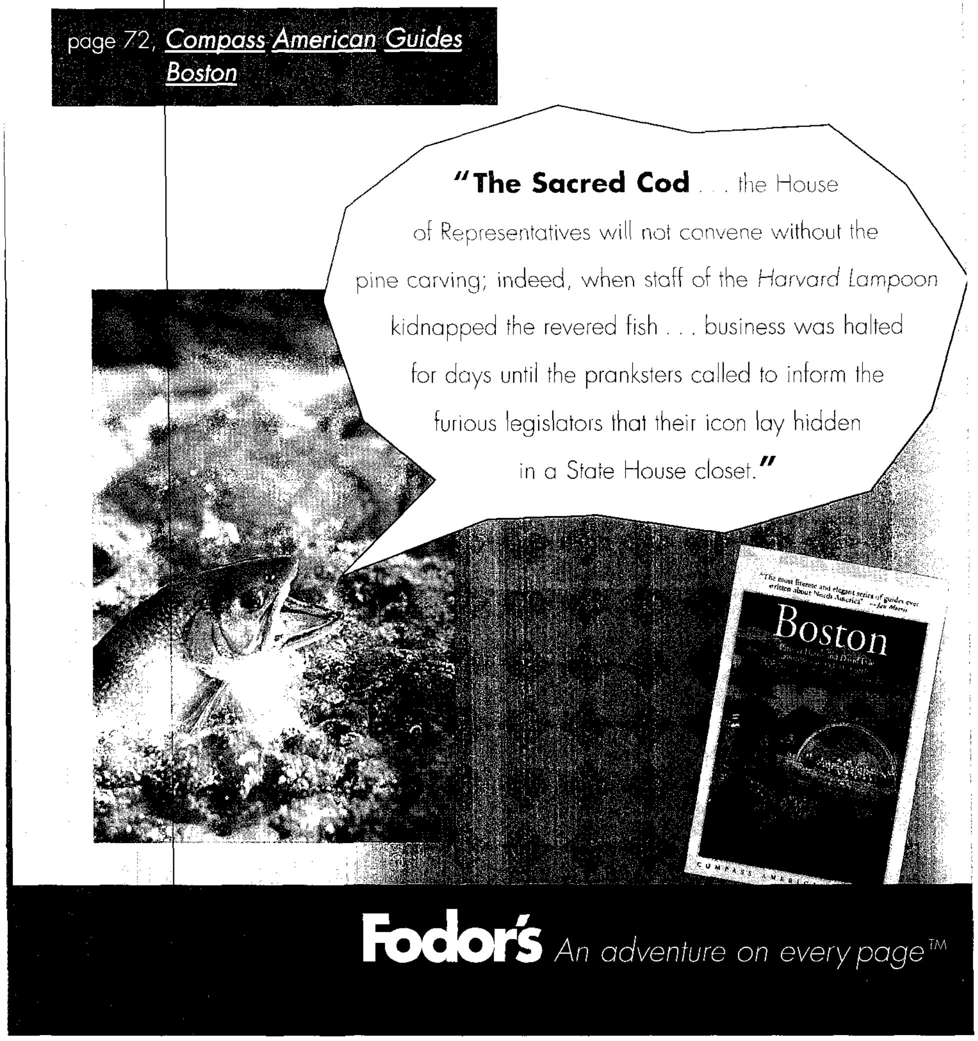
It is necessary at some point for every family to acquire a daughter-in-law. This girl must come from a good family. She must have a pleasant personality—decent and not shameless and bold. This girl should keep her eyes lowered and, because she is embarrassed and shy, her head bowed, as well. Nobody wants a girl who stares people right in the face with big froggy eyes. She should be fair-complexioned, but if she is dark the dowry must include at least one of the following items: a television set, a refrigerator, a Godrej-brand steel cupboard, or a motor scooter. When this girl sings, her voice must bring tears of feeling to the eyes. When she dances, people should exclaim "Wah!" in astounded pleasure. It should be made clear that she will not dance and sing after marriage and shame the family. This girl should have passed all her examinations in the first division but will listen respectfully as you lecture her on various subjects you yourself failed in secondary school. She must not stride, or kick up her legs like a horse. She must sit quietly, with knees together. She should talk just a little to show she can: one word, or maybe two after she has been coaxed and begged several times, "Just a few sentences. Just one sentence." Her mother should urge, "Eat something. Eat a laddoo. My daughter made these with her own hands." And these laddoos must not be recognizable as coming from the sweetmeat shop down the road.

She must be able to eat with knife and fork, or at least with a spoon. She should not be fat. She should be pleasantly plump, with large hips and breasts but a small waist. Talk of husband and children should so overcome her with shyness and embarrassment that she should hide her face, pink as a rosebud, in the fold of her sari. Then, if she has fulfilled all the requirements for a sound character and impressive accomplishments, if her parents have agreed to meet all the necessary financial contributions, if the fortune-tellers have decided the stars are lucky and the planets are compatible, everyone can laugh with relief and tilt her face up by the chin and say she is exactly what the family have been looking for, that she will be a daugh-



page 72, Compass American Guides Boston

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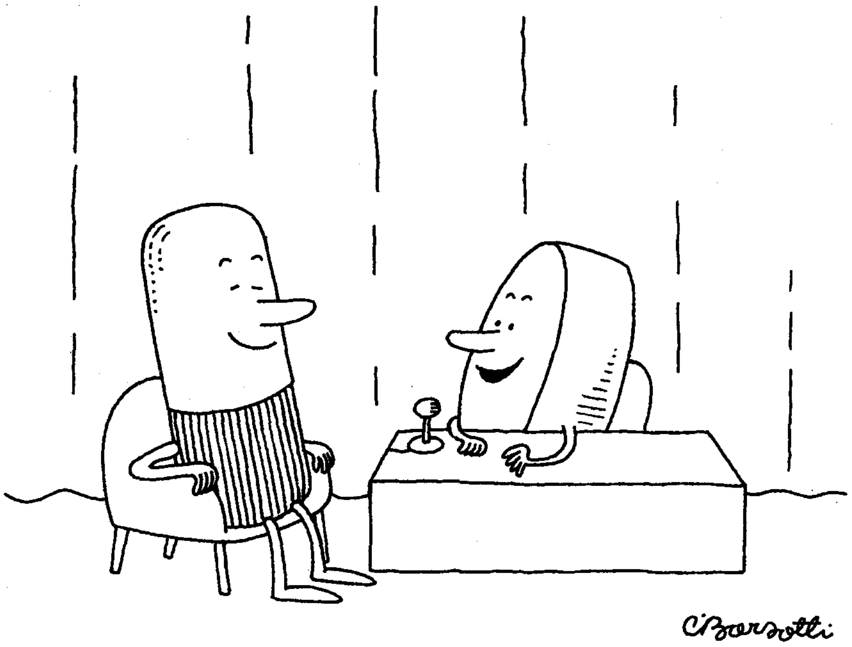


"I understand they've uncovered some weird new side effects since you were here last."

• •

ter to their household. This, after all, is the boy's family. They're entitled to their sense of pride.

But the family could find only one prospective daughter-in-law. She was scrawny and dark. "Like a crow," Mrs. Chawla said indignantly when the first photograph was shown to them by their old neighbor Lakshmiji, who was acting as marriage broker. "You are trying to marry poor Sampath to a crow."

"He is lucky to find anyone at all," said Mr. Chawla, who had given up all hope of motor scooters and wedding parties at the Hans Raj Hotel.

The girl arrived, along with her family, on the public bus. Apart from her family, the bus was full of singing ladies and gentlemen, pilgrims returning from a trip to the Krishna temple in a neighboring town. The Chawla family watched as the bus veered off the road like a crazy beetle and moved toward them in a cloud of dust.

The bus driver had obligingly offered to drop off the family right at Sampath's orchard. A bride-to-be should not have to walk and grow dusty and be shown to disadvantage, he said sympathetically. He himself had a daughter to marry. "Yes, yes, let's take them directly to the boy," chorused the other passengers, pausing to make this decision before resuming their hymn singing.

Despite the driver's kindness and the attention she had received with the help of a handkerchief, a little spit, and a large amount of talcum powder, the girl descended from the bus looking extremely dusty. The pilgrims, curious about what might happen during this unusual encounter between prospective marriage partners, tumbled out of the bus as well, in a messy and chaotic heap. They needed a break for lunch anyway, and a little private time behind some trees. Holding the prospective bride before them like a gift, the group moved toward the guava tree.

Sampath had always had a soft corner for the lady on the label of the coconut-hair-oil bottle. He had spent a rather large amount of time in consideration of her mysterious smile upon the bathroom shelf. While squatting on the mildewed wooden platform taking his bucket baths, he had conducted a series of imagined encounters with her, complete with imagined conversations and imagined quarrels and reconciliations. She would meet him wreathed in the scent of the oil, with a smile as white as the gleaming inside of a coconut. A braid of hair had travelled downward from the top of the coconut lady's head and followed the undulations of the bottle. Sampath looked down at the veiled woman standing underneath his tree, and felt hot and horrified.

"Please come down and be introduced. You have sat in the tree long enough," said

Mr. Chawla. Sampath thought he might faint.

"Climb up, daughter," the girl's father urged her. "Climb up. Come on. One step. Just a step."

The devotees raised the girl's rigid, unwilling form into the tree. "Up," they urged. Slowly she began to climb. She was encased in layers of shiny material like a large, expensive toffee. The cloth billowed about her, making her look absurdly stout. Her gold slippers slipped with every step. Her sari was pulled over her head and she held the edge of it between her teeth so as to keep as much of her face modestly covered as possible. It was clear this girl would not take well to life in a tree. It seemed an eternity before she neared Sampath. She paused and looked back down for further directions. Nobody knew quite what to expect, or how she should proceed. Even Mr. Chawla was at a loss as to what should happen next.

"Touch his feet!" someone finally shouted, in a moment of inspiration.

"Yes, touch his feet," the rest of the pilgrims cried, and, extending a single timid finger like a snail peeping from its shell, she gingerly poked at Sampath's toe. Her finger was as cold as ice, and moist. Sampath leaped up in horror. In an equal state of distress, the girl let out a faint cry. Losing her balance and her gold slippers, she tumbled indecorously out of the tree, accompanied by the more robust cries of the pilgrims and her family, who rushed at her with arms outstretched. But they failed to catch her as she fell, and she landed with a dull thump upon the ground.

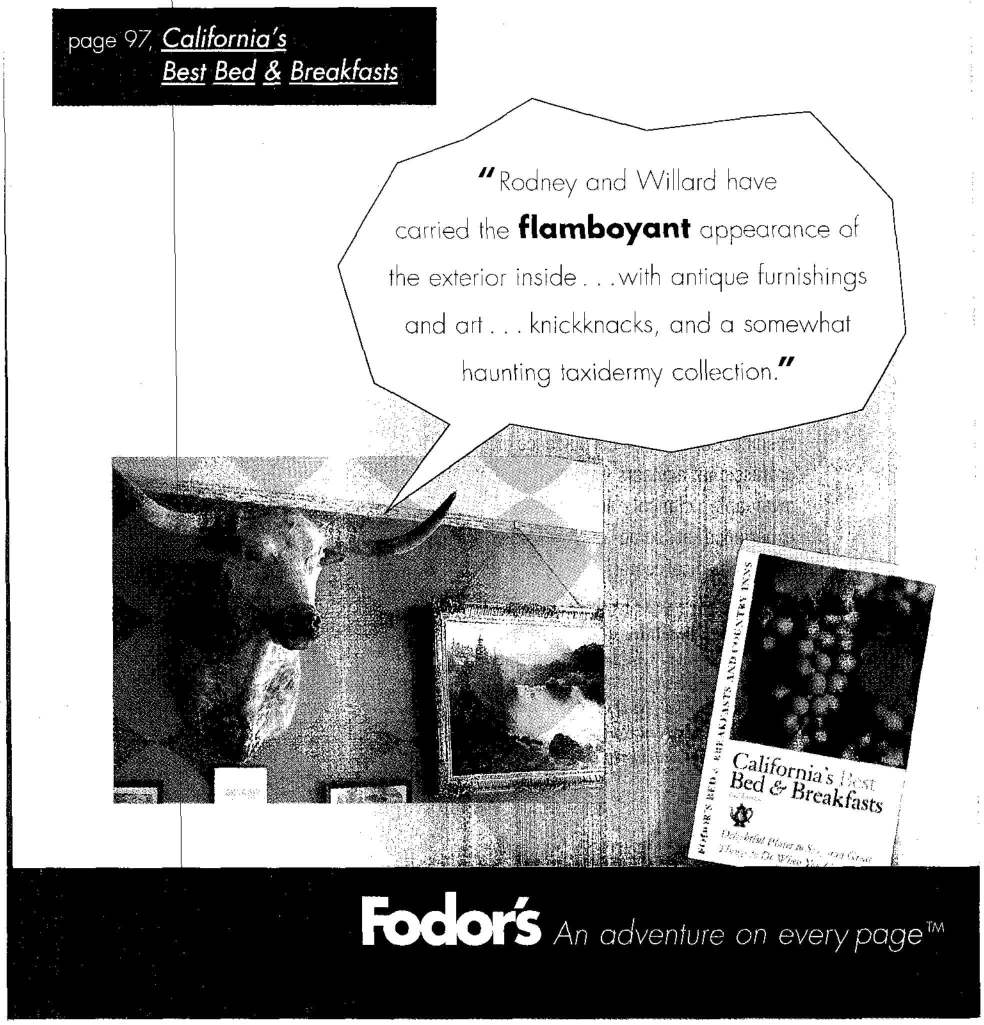
The signs for marriage were not auspicious.

The devotees propped her against a tree and fanned her with a leafy branch. "What am I to do with this boy?" Mr. Chawla said, throwing his hands up in the air. "Tell me what I should do. The best education. A job. A wife. The world served to him on a platter, but, oh no, none of it is good enough for him. Mister here must run and sit in a tree. He is not in the least bit thankful for all that has been done for him."

The girl began to sneeze in tiny mouselike squeals. "Stop fanning her with that dirty branch!" someone shouted. "All the dust must have gone up her nose."

"Dust or no dust, it is yet one more inauspicious sign," another onlooker said.

Pinky felt terribly scornful of this third-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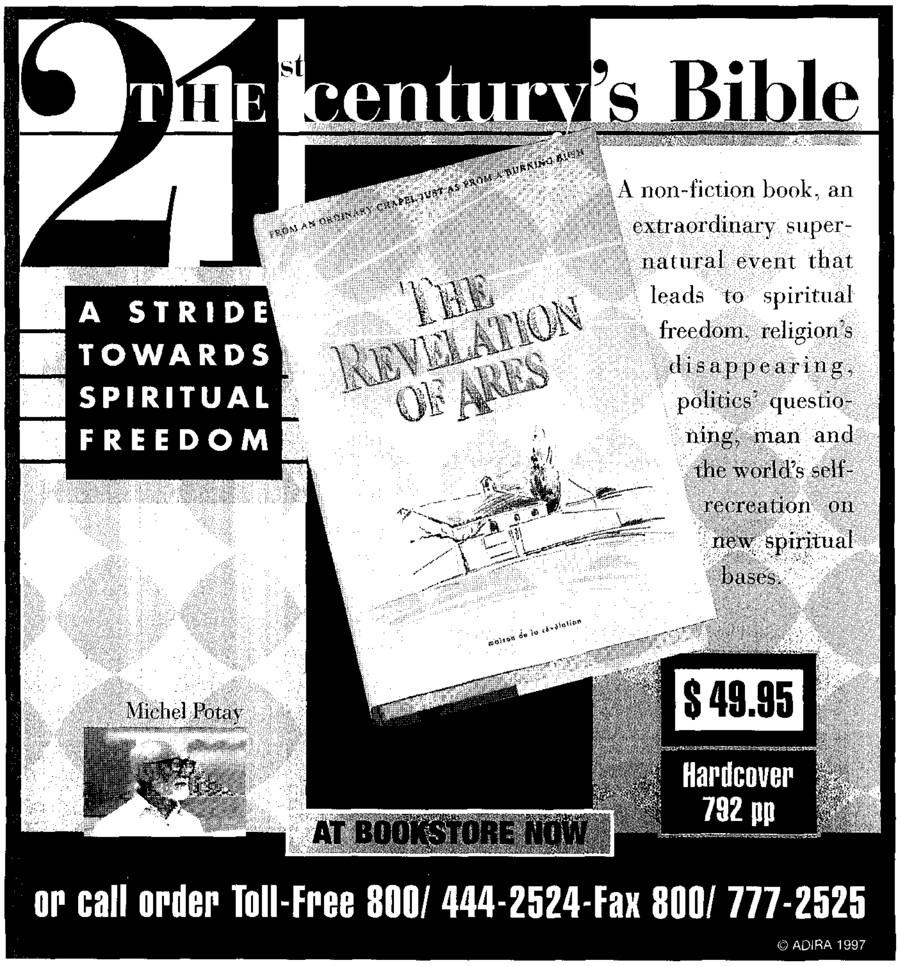
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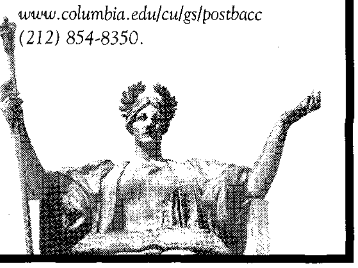

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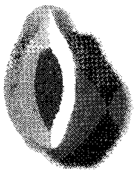

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because they are behind the mountain,
like the flute notes balancing
light as dust
on the dark air of this banquet hall
after we have gone.

—CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

rate woman who had responded to such a greatly consequential moment in her life by sneezing and whimpering. She gave her a good pinch from behind, hoping to see her jump, but the girl continued to squeak and sniffle. The talcum powder slid down her face in a milky river.

"What can I do?" Mr. Chawla asked of the crowd. "What am I to do with this boy?" He was sweating despite the pleasant breeze that rotated about them, laden with the scent of earth and burgeoning vegetation.

He was the head of a family and he liked it that way.

But oh! What good was it to be the head of a family when you had a son who ran and sat in a tree? Who slipped from beneath your fingers and shamed you?

"What am I to do?" he demanded of the devotees still milling about, to show them it was not for lack of effort and concern on his behalf that Sampath had ended up in such a pitiful state. He hit his forehead with the flat of his palm, for drama has a way of overriding the embarrassment of a situation that should be privately experienced.

The ladies and gentlemen from the bus felt a little sorry for him. "Yes, yes, how shameful," they muttered. "And coming from a decent family and all. Clearly the boy has been derailed."

They stared at Sampath, watching to see how his father's distress would affect him. Surely any son, even a son like Sampath, would respond to such a moving show of emotion. Sensitive to the atmosphere of expectation beneath him, Sampath looked down into their upturned eyes. He thought of his old school and the post office and entire roomfuls of people awaiting the answer to questions he had often not even heard. He wondered how it could be that he had never felt comfortable among people. "Go on with your own lives!" he wanted to shout. "Go on, go on! Leave me to mine."

But of course he could not say any such thing. In desperation he looked around him. Among the crowd of faces down below he recognized that of Mr. Singh, the brother-in-law of a neighbor in Shahkot. Mr. Singh, whose letters he had sometimes read in idle moments in the post office, steaming them open over glasses of tea or just prying them open, the humidity in the air having rendered the gum almost entirely ineffectual. Lazily, he had perused the contents of a large quantity of letters during his time at work. In a frantic plea for help, he shouted, "Mr. Singhji!"

He remembered one particular letter sent by Mr. Singh to his father.

"Is your jewelry still safely buried beneath the tulsi plant?"

Mr. Singh turned pale. "How do you know about my circumstances?" he asked.

Sampath caught sight of Mrs. Chopra. "How is that lump in your throat that travels up and down your windpipe, whispering threats and almost bursting right out of your chest?"

"*Hai*," she gasped, "who told you?"

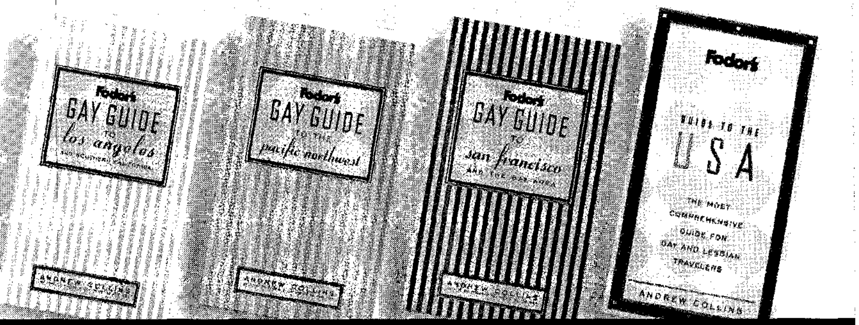
Encouraged now by his success, Sampath brightened a little. He jabbed his finger at a bald-headed man in the crowd, and said, "And you, sir, that secret oil you got from the doctor in Side Gully. Clearly it is not working. Try a good massage with mustard oil, and your hair will sprout as thick and as plentiful as grass in the Cherrapunji rain."

The devotees drove back into Shahkot with the news. There was a man up in the guava tree, a remarkable man. He had known all sorts of things. The dacoits were blackmailing poor Mr. Singh. Ratan Sinha had been using a special hair oil to no effect. An evil spirit had established itself in Mrs. Chopra's throat.

Clearly, there was more to this post-office clerk than to ordinary mortals. In his eyes they had detected a rare spirit.

IT was at this point that Mr. Chawla had a realization—all of a sudden, with a tumble and rush of understanding, a realization so quick and so incredible in nature that his heart was caught in a state of constant pounding. Sampath might make his family's fortune. They could be rich! How many hermits were secretly wealthy? How many holy men were not at all the beggars they appeared to be? How many men of unfathomable wisdom possessed unfathomable bank accounts? What an opportunity had arisen out of nowhere. Already there was a change in the way people looked at Sampath; no longer did they snigger and smirk or make sympathetic noises with their tongues. Mr. Chawla kept his thoughts to himself and didn't say a word to anyone, but, in a sudden turnabout of policy, which both surprised and pleased his wife and his mother, who were already settling into the orchard as if it were their own long-lost home, he stopped berating Sampath for having climbed up the tree, and turned his attention to other matters.

Gradually, Sampath was provided with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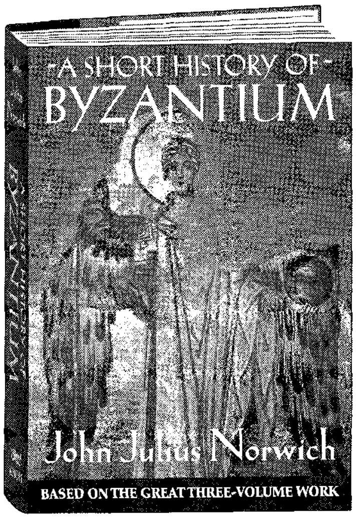
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all sorts of comforts, and the more elaborate his living arrangements the happier he was. A cot was raised up into the tree and fastened with rope. A striped umbrella donated by a friendly servant of the retired judge was positioned over Sampath's head. He made a lovely picture seated there amid the greenery, reclining on his cot at a slight angle to the world; propped against numerous cushions; tucked up, during chilly evenings, in a glamorous satin quilt covered with leopard-skin spots. On his head he sported a tea-cozy-like red woollen hat that had been knitted by his grandmother and raised to him on a stick. He was particularly fond of this hat, for it kept his head snug and warm at night when the breeze was chilly, and it kept the night rustlings, the crawling of little black beetles, ants, and moths, out of his ears as well.

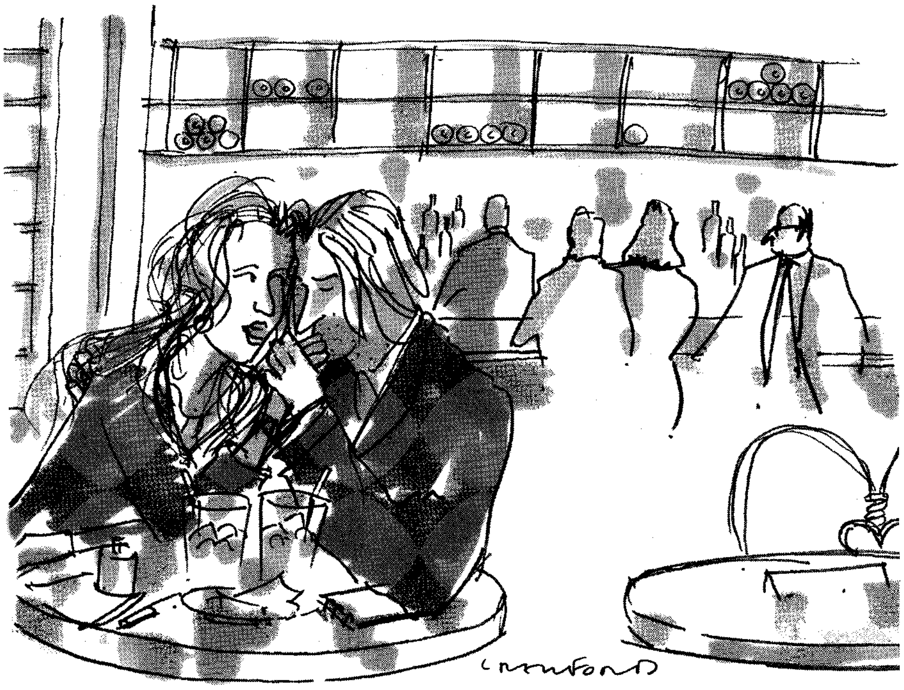
"I'm comfortable," he announced to his family with a gesture of dismissal when he found everything to his satisfaction, leaving them for a minute bewildered, for they were yet to get used to this reversal in their relationship. How they had scolded him once upon a time for every little thing he had done. Now here he was waving at them as if he were a rajah wishing to be left alone. When they were needed again, he summoned them with shouts, starting right at dawn, when he desired his morning tea, and then a little later when he was ready for his bath, which required elaborate arrangements to be made by the family, who were, after all, willing to do quite a bit of work in this regard, for they had always been a clean family. Bucketfuls of hot water were raised to Sampath via a rope levering system designed especially for this purpose by his father.

When it came to his meals, Pinky's efforts in climbing up with bowls and dishes had ended more often in accidents than in success, with Sampath's dinner either in the grass or, worse, splattered and scalding over the poor bearer of food.

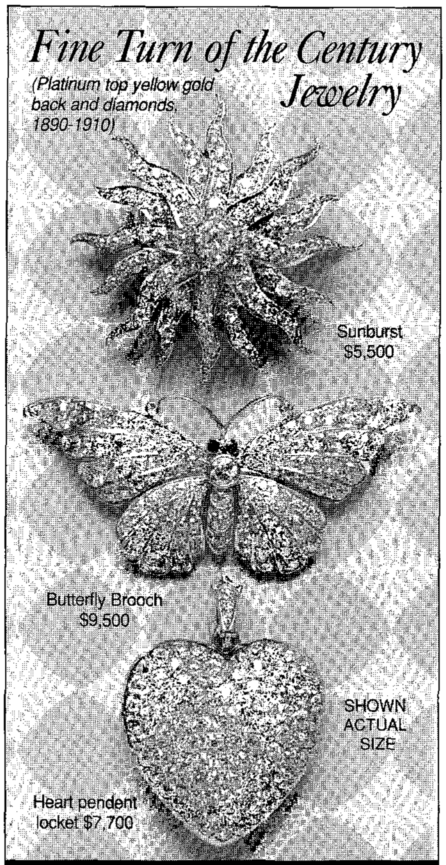
"This is absurd," said Mr. Chawla. "This isn't working." And he attached an old wooden crate to the elementary pulley system used to deliver Sampath's bathwater, and thereafter Sampath's meals were given to him simply by pulling on a rope and raising the crate. As the fluffy chapatis and puris were made down below they were proffered up to him speared atop a bamboo stick, as were slices of pickle, bits of fruit, and other tasty tidbits.

THUS ensconced in his orchard bower, Sampath gave what came to be known as the Sermon in the Guava Tree, in which he responded to people's queries with such a mysterious charm and wit that they arrived in growing numbers to see him, making their way down the narrow path to stare with amazement at this skinny, long-legged apparition amid the leaves.

Among the first to make this trip were



"If you quote Rilke again, I'm just going to have to take my bra off!"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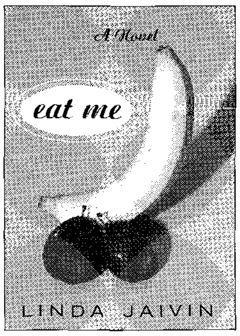

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Miss Jyotsna and Mr. Gupta, his two colleagues from the post office.

"He must have gone through a thorough and complete transformation," said Miss Jyotsna. "Look how his face is being so different now."

Certainly it was a happier, calmer face. "*Namasteji*," said Sampath, greeting them cheerfully from his cot in the tree, his new position of power. Really, he thought, he was quite fond of them. They had always meant well, unlike many others he could name.

"Hello, Sampath," said Mr. Gupta. "Why did you not take me with you? I could have had a little rest from this one here." He pointed at Miss Jyotsna with a comic expression on his face.

"Any time you want a rest from her you should send her to the sari and shalwar kameez shop," said Sampath, laughing. "You know how much this lady is loving clothes. . . . Oh, but maybe that is not such a good idea. Already she owes the Ladies' Fashion Shop a hundred and fifty-two rupees and eighty paise."

Once when Miss Jyotsna had been summoned to the office of the head of the post office, Sampath had had the occasion to examine the contents of her purse: the lipstick and comb, the embroidered handkerchief, the receipts and safety pins, the toffees and little vials of homeopathic medicine.

Miss Jyotsna raised a trembling hand to her mouth. The blood rushed to her face. She had kept her debt to the sari shop a strict secret. What else could Sampath say about her? She had heard of the way he had stunned the devotees of the Krishna temple with his clairvoyance; now he had used his powers to examine her.

She nudged Mr. Gupta with her elbow. "Treat him with some respect," she said, surprising him with the strange new note of reverence in her voice. She was apparently awestruck by what she saw. And even the paan-shop man, who had also come to visit, thinking that maybe he would sell a few paans while satisfying his curiosity, turned to give Mr. Gupta a dirty look, and said, "Clearly this fellow here is unversed in spiritual matters."

"But it is only Sampath," protested Mr. Gupta.

But clearly it was not only Sampath. It was Sampath of unfathomable wisdom, sitting in his tree abode.

The sweetshop man joined them after

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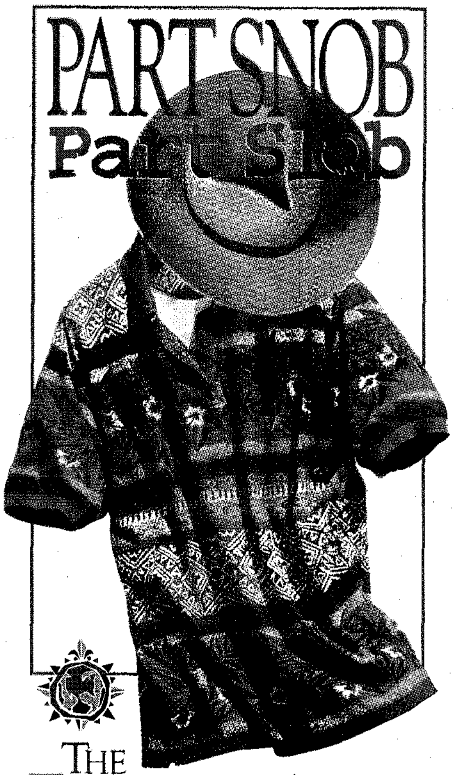

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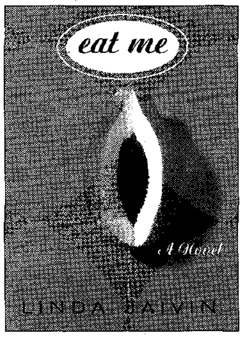

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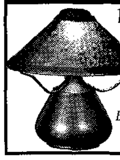

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work, then two college students skipping a lecture, the washerman on his bicycle, and a pregnant lady who wished to know if her baby would be a boy or a girl. "Ah, yes," she said with satisfaction, to those standing about the tree with her, "he has the same expression as the Tajewala sage in samadhi. Perhaps you have seen the photographs?"

"My son is keeping bad company," interrupted a distressed but spirited relative of Lakshmiji's who was dressed in a canary-yellow sari. "What is there to do?" she asked.

"Add lemons to milk and it will grow sour," answered Sampath in an exceptionally sociable and happy temper, mimicking the old men of Shahkot, who liked to sit at their gates on winter afternoons, basking in their socks and hats, while they lectured passersby. "But add some sugar, Madam, and wah! how good that milk will taste. These are things I do not have to tell you. You yourself know you behaved just like your son when you were young."

He impressed himself by how many details he had stowed away while reading in the post office. Why, he could just pull them out of some secret compartment in his brain the way a magician pulled rabbits from a hat. How admiringly the people below the tree were looking at him! Never before had he felt the sweet and unique pleasure of giving advice which now suffused his being and spread to shine about his face.

"By this, do you mean I should remove him from the presence of these undesirable characters?" Lakshmiji's relative asked.

"If you put a chicken on the fire and leave it, in a little while it will be no longer a chicken but ash and bones. Leave a kettle on the flames, the water will grow hot, and then, if someone does not lift it off, it will all boil away until there is nothing left. If your child is playing with a dead smelly mouse, you will not debate, 'Should I let him be, should I let him play.' No, straightaway you will throw away the mouse and take your child indoors to wash his hands."

Mr. Chawla and Pinky, who had just arrived from a trip to the market in time to hear this last sentence, looked at each other in disbelief when they saw how closely people listened to Sampath.

"Did you hear?" Mr. Chawla asked Pinky.

"Dead smelly mouse?" said Pinky, incredulous.

"If you do not weed," said Sampath, "your tomato plant will not flower."

Sampath's grandmother and Mrs. Chawla, flushed with pride, were already part of the crowd. They listened to every word that was being uttered, leaning forward to hear a round-faced man ask, "I am being overtaken by spiritual matters. How can I keep my mind on my responsibilities?"

"If you talk to a young girl as she stands before the mirror, it is like talking to a deaf person. And can you keep a moth from flying into the lantern by saying she should worry about her three children?"

"But are you saying I should forgo my duties to my wife and children?"

"Once my uncle had a rooster, and an insect laid its eggs in the flesh of its rear end. It knew the young ones would have a warm place to live in and plenty to eat before they were old enough to leave."

"Which is the better way to realize God? The way of devotion or the way of knowledge?"

The questions came fast and furious.

"Some people can only digest fish cooked in a light curry. Others are of a sour disposition and should not eat pickled fish. In the South they enjoy fish cooked with coconut water. I myself have a preference for pomfret in a sauce of chili and tamarind thickened with gram flour."

"Where can I begin my search? What is the starting point?"

"POST-OFFICE CLERK CLIMBS TREE," Mr. Chawla read to his astounded family a little later in the week when the news had reached the local news bureau and was deemed worthy of attention. "Fleeing tedious duties at the Shahkot Post Office, a clerk has been reported to have settled in a large guava tree. According to popular speculation, he is one of an unusual spiritual nature, his childlike ways being coupled with unfathomable wisdom."

There it was—a modest column introducing Sampath to the world, along with news of a scarcity of groundnut and an epidemic of tree frogs, and the rumor that Coca-Cola might soon be arriving in India. ♦

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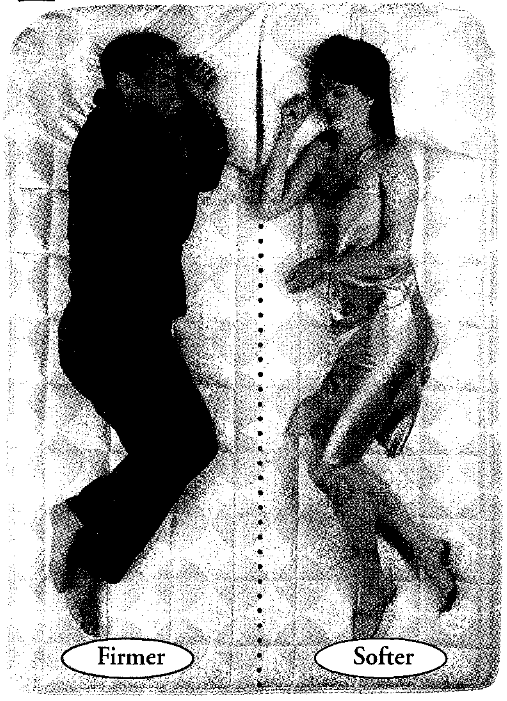

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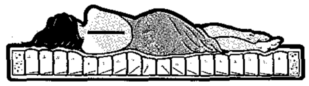

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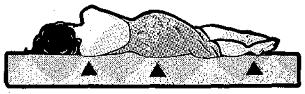

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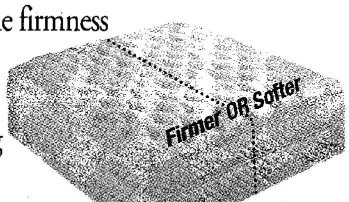

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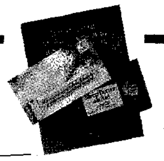

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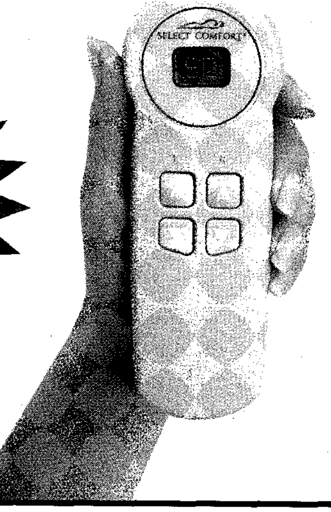

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ANNALS OF LANGUAGE

BEYOND TRANSLATION

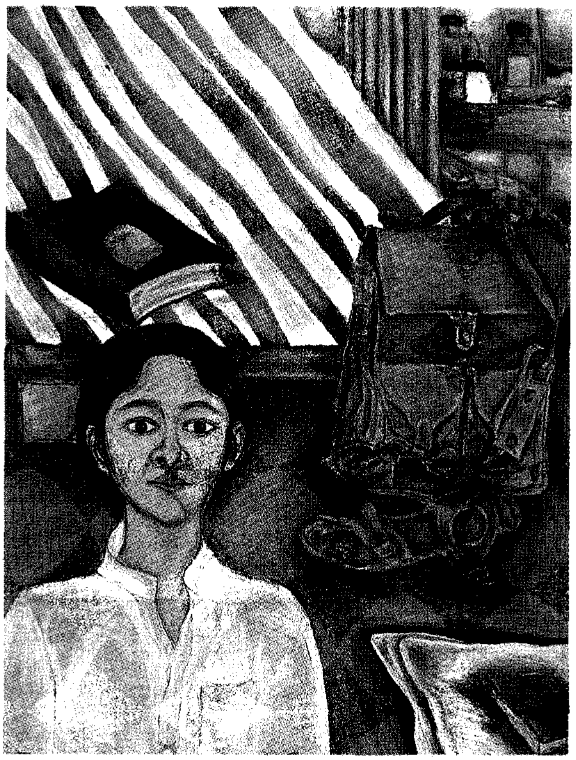
An English-speaking child in Calcutta.

BY AMIT CHAUDHURI

THE Dakkhinee Bookshop, at the turning of Lansdowne Road and Rash Behari Avenue, was really no more than a pavement bookstall. It stands there even now, still doing business—though, with more than half its books gone, it is a shadow of its former self. If you go down Rash Behari Avenue toward Lake Market in the evening, you can see it: a series of cupboards against a wall, shelves behind glass-paned doors, lit by an electric light and surrounded by pavement and traffic, as if the house in which it once existed had uncannily disappeared.

When I was a boy, visiting my cousins' house in Calcutta, this was the main bookshop in the area. Although it was a good half hour away from where my cousins lived, we would trek to it on foot. Any car passing the bookshop at that time would have seen three boys, their backs to the road, their heads bent. Then we would return home with books in our hands: adventure annuals and mystery stories—my book in English and my cousins' books in Bengali. Childhood was a time when I read nothing in Bengali and my cousins read nothing in English. Sitting side by side, we would begin to read almost immediately, enveloped in the same contentment, as we read our books in different languages and inhabited different imaginary worlds.

While we were reading, the routines of the house continued around us. The maid might be swabbing the floor, leaving dark, moist arcs on the red stone, which dried and disappeared soon after. Downstairs, my aunt might be overseeing something in the kitchen while my uncle prepared to eat an early lunch before going out to work at his small business.



K. NANDINI GOUD, 1989, COURTESY SOTHEBY'S.

We sat just anywhere while we read—on the stairs, on the floor, against the side of a bed—suspending activity, waiting for a story or a book to be finished. It might have been the years of the Naxal uprising outside (with many of Calcutta's young men drawn into the movement and spilling blood in the lane); both Naxal and Congress supporters lived in some of the houses nearby. Pictures of Mao were drawn on the walls. Cries would be heard; bottles being broken; far away, the explosion of a homemade device. Schools and exams were disrupted, and the Naxals—some of them the most brilliant young students—became the terror of doctors and landlords and the rich. The years passed.

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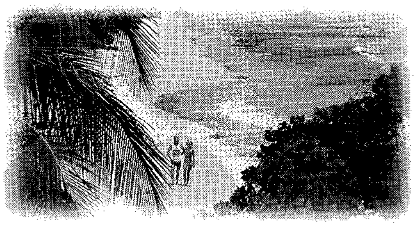

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And we still sat reading side by side, of worlds that could not be translated into each other; changes came to us as sounds in the street, adornments to our consciousness.

My uncle, with his shawl wrapped around his kurta, did not know what to make of this. He had always supported the Marxists, but now they were destroying his business and would drive him to the verge of bankruptcy. His business was probably a failure from the start. He was a German-trained engineer who, in the mid-sixties, left a promising job to start a company that made cranes. The demeaning manufacture of things like soap and kitchen utensils, which went into the market and were bought rapidly, was not for Bengalis like him, and into his business he put a substantial amount of the money he had got as a dowry from his marriage. Already, however, Calcutta was in decline: the Marxism that my uncle so innocently admired was destroying Bengal's heavy industry with its trade unions; large companies were leaving for other parts of the country. Partition had already mortally wounded the poor and the working classes; now the middle class was being broken. In conditions such as these, my uncle's factory—like others in Howrah, along the outskirts of Calcutta—was doomed. At fifty-four, he would have a heart attack.

But did the future matter then? While we read, my aunt would come upstairs, perhaps to rearrange something—a pillow on the bed—or to have her bath and do her *puja*, or to call us downstairs for food. I would be reading about lighthouses, boating adventures, or mountain expeditions, while my cousins read about mad scientists and mysteries, about holy men and the seven seas and bloodthirsty kings. While we sat with our books in our hands, our minds racing with demons, usurped kingdoms, seashores, and collapsing houses, my aunt hovered around us. She (whom I shall call Shobha *mami*) had a gift with children, drawing an enchantment around them without any apparent effort, and the spell lasted all of my childhood. She would sort out bones from a difficult fish; she would return home, flushed from the market, to tease and joke with us. And she would treat us all alike—not as if we were, all three of us, her sons but as if we were all infinitely and equally interesting. It strikes me now how little I knew, or know, of her desires, fears, affections. On growing up, I am not any closer to her; it is almost as if it were someone else that I now remember.

Not having grown up in Bengal, I never learned to read or write Bengali in school. I lived, an only child, in Bombay with my parents. My father worked in the corporate world of tall buildings and offices, the Marine Drive and the Arabian Sea. My sojourns in Calcutta, during the summer holidays, and sometimes in the winter, lasted no more than two months. But once there I was plunged into the lives of my cousins and never thought of going back until I had to. I never thought of myself as a visitor.

What were my cousins' thoughts? I never entirely knew. When we finished reading our stories in our different languages and looked up and became conscious once more of the house, the secret flashlight signals and demons who could grow eight times their size were still in our heads.

Once finished, our books lost their interest, but they remained precious as material objects, and we would pretend to sell them to each other as make-believe hawkers. But, essentially, our worlds remained locked from each other; we never read one another's stories, though I admired the covers of their books, with severed heads dripping blood, and princesses as frail as dragonfly wings. They would never know what it meant, as I did, to live outside this world of magic and small means; and I would never know what it meant to grow up reading their stories—by Saradindu and Sukumar Ray and Hemendra Kumar Ray—and be transported, as I believed they were for those half hours, more completely into another world than I was. ♦

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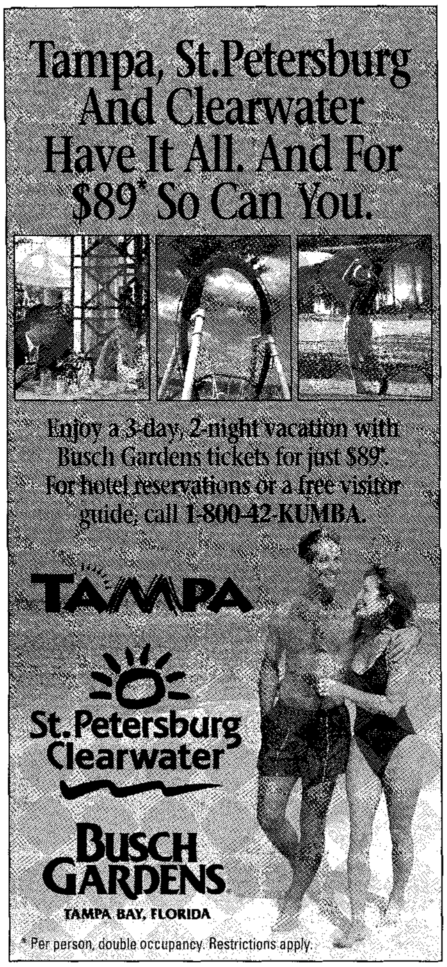
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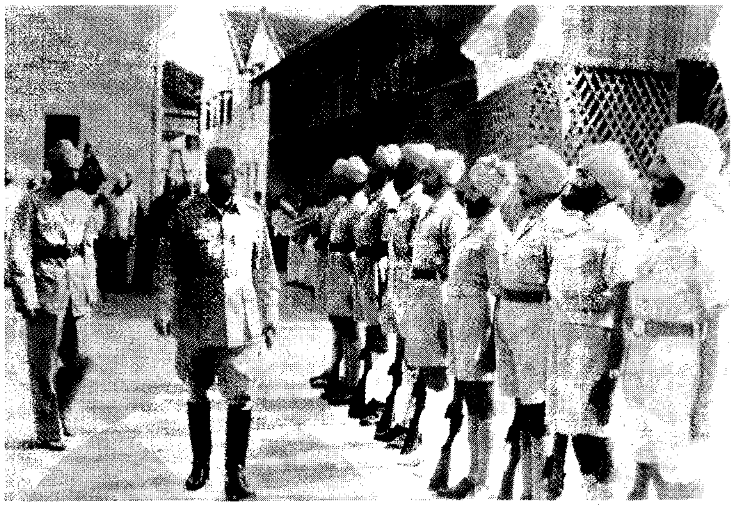
A REPORTER AT LARGE

INDIA'S UNTOLD WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The subcontinent was famously freed from British rule at midnight, August 14, 1947. But the most important battles of independence were fought several years earlier. The author tracks down the survivors of India's first National Army.

BY AMITAV GHOSH



NETAJI RESEARCH BUREAU

I WAS born several years after India's independence, and the stories my parents told me about that time were so dissimilar that they could have been about different countries.

My mother grew up in Calcutta, and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, nonviolence, civil disobedience, and the terrors that accompanied Partition, in 1947. My father came of age in a small provincial town in the state of Bihar. He turned twenty-one in 1942, one of the most tumultuous years in Indian history. That was the year the Indian National Congress, the country's largest political party, launched a nationwide movement calling on the British to quit India; it was when Mahatma Gandhi denounced the Raj as a "poison that corrupts all it touches." And in that historic year of anti-imperialist discontent my father left home to become an officer in the British colonial army in India. My father's stories were of the war and of his fellow-Indians who fought loyally beside the British.

My mother's stories appealed to me more: they had a straightforward, compelling plot line and, in Mahatma Gandhi, an incomparably vital and endearing protagonist. Yet now, fifty years after India attained its freedom, stories of men like my father—soldiers in the British Indian Army—seem to me to shed a special light on Independence, for it was people like him who, through their betrayals and divided loyalties, both made and unmade the British Raj.

No single fact about the Raj is better known than that it enabled a few thousand Britons to rule over hundreds of millions—a feat that could not have been pulled off without the active collaboration of a large number of Indians. Of these none were more important than the soldiers of Britain's colonial army: they were the hinge that held the colonial lid in place over the subcontinent. It was these soldiers, or sepoys, who not only helped the British conquer India but also waged their wars in Burma, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Sudan, and South Africa. They were ruthless in suppressing anticolonial uprisings, in India and elsewhere; they put down rebellions in places as distant as China, Malaya, and Egypt. They also contributed to Britain's victories in bat-

Left: Subhas Chandra Bose, who took comma

the Indian National Army in 1943. Above: Former members of the Indian National Army, in uniform. Photographed by Max Vadukul, May 16, 1997.

tle: in the First World War, there were more than a million Indian combatants, of whom sixty thousand died; during the Second World War, the number of Indians in uniform doubled.

Yet, even as these Indian soldiers wandered the world in the service of the Empire, many, perhaps most, of them harbored treason in their hearts. Indeed, the story of the Raj could well be told as a narrative of failed mutinies, even if most were small-scale affairs that were suppressed with a few executions and then quickly hushed up. (The one exception was the great sepoy-led uprising of 1857, which engulfed the most populous parts of the subcontinent and came close to pushing the British out of northern India.)

My father is one of many Indians who believe that the British would not have left India when they did had they not been faced with the prospect of a large-scale mutiny soon after the end of the war. Yet mutiny did not figure in his own story: by the end of the war, he was a lieutenant colonel and had twice been mentioned in dispatches. He is seventy-six now, and I am forty-one. I know most of his stories by heart: I have listened to them over and over again, with that special boredom which sons keep for their fathers' memories. Now, half a century after Independence, I have discovered a new interest in these stories, not for what they say but for all that they left unsaid. What was he fighting for? What were his loyalties? Did he, too, nurture treason in his heart?

In Michael Ondaatje's novel "The English Patient," a character says of the Indian soldier Kip, "What is he doing fighting English wars?" For my father, the story of the war began simply. The youngest in a large family, he grew up in Chapra, a town whose only distinction was that it served as the seat of its district. He left to go to college, and then, without telling his family, he applied for a place in the Indian Military Academy, a prestigious officers' training school in the North Indian town of Dehra Dun. He was accepted as a "gentleman-cadet" in 1942 and was commissioned the next year as a second lieutenant.

My father was lucky to get in; a generation earlier, he would have stood little chance. Like other institutions of the British Empire, the Indian Army was run on elaborate theories of race, which specified exactly which groups were fit for enlistment. In practice, these theories established a system of rewards to give the favored groups incentives to be loyal to the British. After the Mutiny of 1857, the Army recruited mainly from the area known as the Punjab (now divided between Pakistan and India). But by 1942 the exigencies of the Second World War had caused these racial dogmas to be laid aside, and the Indian Army began recruiting officers from every part of the subcontinent. By the time my father joined, one in every ten officers was Indian.

Late in 1943, my father's battalion was sent to the border between India and Japanese-occupied Burma. A few months later, the Japanese attempted to invade India. As the fighting progressed, there were rumors that the enemy units consisted not just of Japanese but also of some Indians: they were part of a traitorous group that had been given the name Japanese-Indian Fifth Column—or Jiffs, for short.

Slowly, things turned against the Japanese, and my father's battalion captured some of these Jiffs. To the Indians, the encounters came as a shock. "They were starving," my father recalls. "Their bodies were covered with jungle sores. They had no provisions and nearly no ammunition. But they still fought, with a crazy kind of courage."

The Jiffs were dressed in old uniforms of the British Indian Army. Soon my father and his friends learned that many of them were from the same regiments that they were, and that their officers had graduated from the same academy. On being questioned, the Jiffs said that they belonged to the Azad Hind Fauj, or Indian National Army, a group formed by Indian prisoners of war in Japanese-occupied Malaya and Singapore. They described this army as the military arm of a government in exile headed by Subhas Chandra Bose, a former president of the Congress Party.

To my father and his colleagues, these accounts sounded concocted and vaguely fantastic. Subhas Bose was a charismatic figure with a huge political following in India. Before the war, he had been one of the most important contenders for the country's leadership. It was well known that he had disappeared from his Calcutta home early in the war and hadn't been heard of since. Officers like my father had no reason to believe their prisoners' accounts, and most of them accepted what their superiors told them—that the Jiffs were turncoats, whom the Japanese had won over either by intimidation or with money and other inducements. Sometimes quarrels broke out, with Indian soldiers accusing their captives of being traitors.

"It's you who are the traitors," the prisoners would shout back. "You kill your own people to earn your living! You are an army of mercenaries, and your job is to keep your own country enslaved."

To the comparatively well-fed soldiers on the British side of the lines, there was something pitiful in the idea that these men fancied themselves patriots, who were going to liberate India from the British. But they were in for a shock when they returned home at the end of the war. It was the former Jiffs who were treated as heroes.

Wartime censorship had kept the Indian public almost completely ignorant of the Indian National Army. But in August, 1945, shortly after Japan's surrender, the news of Bose's death reached India. It caused an immediate sensation. Newspapers revealed that he had been the head of an army that numbered some forty thousand, and that the millions-strong expatriate-Indian community of Southeast Asia had supported Bose's government in exile with both manpower and large contributions of money. Journalists who went to Burma to interview survivors were awestruck by the scale of the movement: the rebel administration had had its own hospitals and training camps and a bank in Rangoon, whose funds exceeded that of the government of Burma.

In the eyes of the British, Bose and the members of his provisional government had been stooges of Japanese militarism. The British regarded the officers of the Indian National Army as particularly contemptible, renegades who had betrayed their oaths of allegiance upon being faced with adversity.

The colonial government in New Delhi realized that it was impossible to punish all those who had joined the Indian National Army: there were simply too many. But the government believed that some of the rebels had brutalized Indian prisoners of war who had remained loyal to the British, and an example had to be made. Field Marshal Lord Wavell took the view that once the facts were brought to light Indian public opinion would support the British position. But when the colonial government announced that court-martial proceedings would shortly be instituted, there was an immediate public outcry.

Once the trial was set, the Congress Party was faced with a dilemma. Led by Mahatma Gandhi, the Party had spearheaded the anticolonial movement, building an immense support base. Bose in his lifetime had been an adversary of the Party's two most important leaders—Mahatma Gandhi and his protégé Jawaharlal Nehru, the future Prime Minister of India, who differed sharply with Gandhi on the question of the tactical use of violence. Nehru had once said that he would take up arms himself if Bose were to march into India with Japanese help.

But Nehru, on hearing of the circumstances that had led to the formation of the Indian National Army, became a fervent supporter of the embattled group. The Congress Party announced that it would defend any members of the Indian National Army who were brought to trial, and assembled a team led by Bhulabhai Desai, a barrister from Gujarat who was widely believed to be the most brilliant trial lawyer in India.

HIS AND HERS
(WHEN HE DIES)

• •

THE trial, set to start on November 5, 1945, in Delhi's Red Fort, was clearly intended to be a public spectacle. It was at the Red Fort that the 1857 mutiny against the British had ended. That insurrection had also been led by rebel soldiers from the colonial army. The Indian mutineers had committed ghastly atrocities, massacring hundreds of British civilians. Once the uprising was suppressed, the British retaliated: in Delhi and many other cities, they staged savage reprisals. They shot Indians live from the mouths of cannons and forced some rebels to lick up the blood of their English victims. At the Red Fort, the titular leader of the 1857 uprising, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was tried and sentenced to permanent exile in Burma. He was eighty-two years old. In the fall of 1945, much more was on trial than a group of rebels: it was the relationship between India and Britain.

On the morning of November 5th, three officers of the Indian National Army were brought before the military court: Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sahgal, and Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon. The first was a Muslim, the second a Hindu, and the third a Sikh. They stood accused of murder, of abetment of murder, and of waging war upon His Majesty the King-Emperor of India.

OF the three men charged at the Red Fort that day, only one is still alive: Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon. Through most of the year, he lives alone on a small farm in a remote part of central India. For a brief period around 1947, he was one of the most celebrated people in the country, but within a few years he faded into obscurity. Like many other members of the Indian National Army, Dhillon believes that the Congress politicians who took office after Independence deliberately neglected the movement. His self-imposed isolation was in part a response to this neglect. Today, despite a modest revival of public interest in the Indian National Army, he is known to very few Indians, and his version of the past remains a largely untold story.

I met Colonel Dhillon, as he is now known, this April, in the city of Gwalior, in central India, where he was visiting his daughter and her family. He is eighty-three but looks a good fifteen years younger. A robust, clean-shaven, fresh-faced man, he no longer wears a turban, although he is still a devout Sikh. He wore a turban and kept his hair long, as the Sikh religion requires, until the age of twenty-nine, when he cut his hair after a severe bout of pneumonia.

Colonel Dhillon's face is broad and sharply defined. He talks energetically, and, like many retired soldiers, he can recall dates, troop dispositions, and battalion strengths with uncanny accuracy. He has a great love of Urdu poetry and constantly interrupts himself to quote couplets and phrases, but his recently completed autobiography is in English. As we spoke, he delved constantly into his manuscript, refreshing his memory.

Colonel Dhillon grew up in poverty in a small Punjabi village. His family owned some land, but it wasn't enough for all the sons to live off; it was the British Indian Army that provided them with a livelihood, in return for their loyalty. He happened to belong to exactly that part of the Sikh peasantry which British racial doctrines had pinpointed as ideal for military service, and he joined the Army in 1933, at the age of nineteen, as an ordinary sepoy, or soldier. After five years, he was accepted into the Indian Military Academy, and in 1940 he was commissioned a second lieutenant. Pictures from that time show him wearing the regulation khaki turban of the Sikh soldier—a strikingly good-looking young man, with an open face and a neat black beard.

The other Indian officers in the regiment were mostly from affluent families, the sons of landed aristocrats and successful professionals. One officer, Ayub Khan, was eventually to become the President of Pakistan. Shah Nawaz Khan, who in 1945 would become Dhillon's co-defendant at the Red Fort, was a captain in the same regiment; he was the scion of a famous frontier tribe that had served in the British colonial army for generations. If there was a gilded youth in India, this was it, and Dhillon knew that he was lucky to have found his way into it. The change in his circumstances was giddying: "Where I had once had to salute so many people, now I was being saluted myself—I was now dining at the same table where I had once stood behind the officers' chairs as an orderly; people who had once known me as a common sepoy were now addressing me as Sahib."

It was a time of learning new skills, social as well as military. Eating dinner, for example, required mastering unspoken rules of the officers' mess—the order of the courses, the direction in which the port was to be passed, the right way to drink the King's health, and the proper subjects of conversation. Religion, politics, and the day's work were never to be spoken of at table; women and the name Gandhi were also taboo. Learning to eat the food was another trial. The fare was an uncompromising, military version of English cooking and caused much discontent among the Indians. At times, the mess crackled with internecine sniping, the Indians making pointed remarks about boiled cabbage and the British responding in kind. If the mess radio happened to be playing Bombay film songs, a British officer would find a pretext for turning the dial to another station. An Indian would then get up and flip the dial back again.

Once, Dhillon asked one of his British superiors whether he could join the Officers' Swimming Club. He was politely rebuffed. Another Sikh officer who heard the exchange shouted at Dhillon in their native Punjabi, "Don't think you're special just because you've become an officer. We may be 'sahibs' to our soldiers, but we're still 'bloody niggers' to the British." The Military Academy trained its cadets to believe in the camaraderie of the officer corps; in reality, the lines of division were very deep.

For the Indians, a mundane difference was what rankled most: they earned much less than officers who had been trained in England. The fact that they were soldiers and might be called on to risk death made it doubly hard to accept the disparity in pay: it was as though their lives were of lesser value.

On more than one occasion, Dhillon thought of resigning. He never did. It was partly his training and his background that kept him in the ranks: inherited family loyalties and the inculcated esprit de corps of the regiment. Besides, he and his fellow-officers had faith in the value of what they were doing in the British Indian Army—not because it was British but because, by their lights, it was modern and Western. They had joined the Army trusting that merit and performance would be duly rewarded, that they would have the chance of earning distinction by their own efforts, rather than through the sponsorship of relatives and patrons. It was this hope that drew men like my father to the Army, and that was why issues like salaries, promotions, and service conditions were of such importance.

The discovery of invisible barriers and ceilings disillusioned them with their immediate superiors, but it did not make them hostile to Western institutions. Rather, these encounters with racism served to convince them—as they had an entire generation of Westernized Indians—that the British colonial regime was not Western *enough*, not progressive *enough*. Men like Colonel Dhillon (and my father, for that matter) held Gandhi in personal respect, but they generally had little patience with his critiques of Western science and economics. In this, as in so much else, they were closer to their European contemporaries than to their own compatriots.

DHILLON'S battalion sailed for the British colony of Malaya (as Malaysia was then called) in April of 1941. Once the officers were away from home, it became increasingly difficult to conceal the divisions between them.

Many of the Indians were dismayed to be going at all. The Congress Party had opposed the use of Indian soldiers overseas, on the ground that they had no business fighting British wars when Britain would not grant them independence. These misgivings were so widespread that there were several incidents of mutiny. In mid-1940, a Sikh unit refused to sail to Egypt; four soldiers were executed, and a hundred received life sentences. In places as far apart as East Africa and Hong Kong, groups of Indian soldiers refused to obey their orders and were sent to courts-martial.

To Dhillon, Malaya itself was a revelation. The colony's living standards were a good deal higher than India's, and many ordinary people owned cars, refrigerators, and telephones—luxuries that only the very rich could afford at home. The roads were excellent and the towns clean and well run, with neat, fenced-in bungalows and well-stocked shops. But there was a color bar: Indians were excluded from many clubs and hotels, and it was unacceptable for an "Asiatic" to travel in the same railway compartment as a "European." Dhillon and his colleagues, thrown together with troops from other parts of the empire, found that British and Australian soldiers often pointedly refused to salute Indian officers.

In some parts of Malaya, Indian soldiers also discovered that they were feared, even loathed, because of their repressive role in the colony. For the first time in their lives, these Indians encountered the image that Indian soldiers had acquired in many parts of the British Empire: they had not heard the taunt "the slaves who enslave others" before. It came as a shock to the Indians to see themselves viewed as the detritus of the colonial system. It occurred to more and more Indians to ask themselves why they were defending the empire for the British.

In Malaya, Dhillon made friends with the most senior Indian officer in his battalion, Captain Mohan Singh. Slight and lean, with a hollow-cheeked, bony face, Mohan Singh was eight years older than Dhillon. He was a Sikh from a family that had served the British colonial government for generations. He fitted British notions of the "loyal Indian": his relatives had amassed almost a hundred testimonials from British officials. It was Mohan Singh who was to be the first head of the Indian National Army.

Mohan Singh was an emotional man and took his clashes with his British superiors very much to heart. His experiences in Malaya plunged him into such despondency that he took a leave and went to stay with a friend in the Malayan min-

COURTESY GURBAKHSH SINGH DHILLON

Colonel Dhillon with Queen Elizabeth II in Calcutta in 1961. After the war, the Jiffs were treated like heroes.

ing town of Ipoh. He was ordered back just before the Japanese invasion, but, before returning to his unit, Mohan Singh said something that astonished everyone, including him. "Do not be surprised," he told his friends, "if you find me one day coming down from the north as your liberator, fighting the very Britishers whom I am now going to defend."

THE war in the Pacific began with synchronized Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and the port of Kota Baharu, on the northeast coast of Malaya. On the evening of December 8, 1941, Dhillon's battalion moved to a location fifteen miles north of the border town of Jitra, anticipating that the Japanese might invade Malaya by land through Thailand. They took up positions in a rubber plantation.

Three days later, the Japanese attacked in great force. Dhillon's battalion was pushed back to a riverbank, where they dug in to defend a bridge. Dhillon was standing in the center of a road, talking to another officer, when he heard a rumble. He turned to see tanks bearing down out of the rain-sodden gloom. Such was his surprise—the belief was that the Japanese had no tanks—that he turned to his colleague to ask whose tanks were approaching.

Then the tanks opened fire. The battalion's vehicles were sitting beside the highway, like neatly arranged targets. Within seconds, they were in flames. Dhillon dived off the road, into a stand of rubber. All around him men were weaving through the trees, trying to put as much ground as they could between themselves and the tanks' swivelling turrets. As a fighting unit, the battalion had virtually ceased to exist.

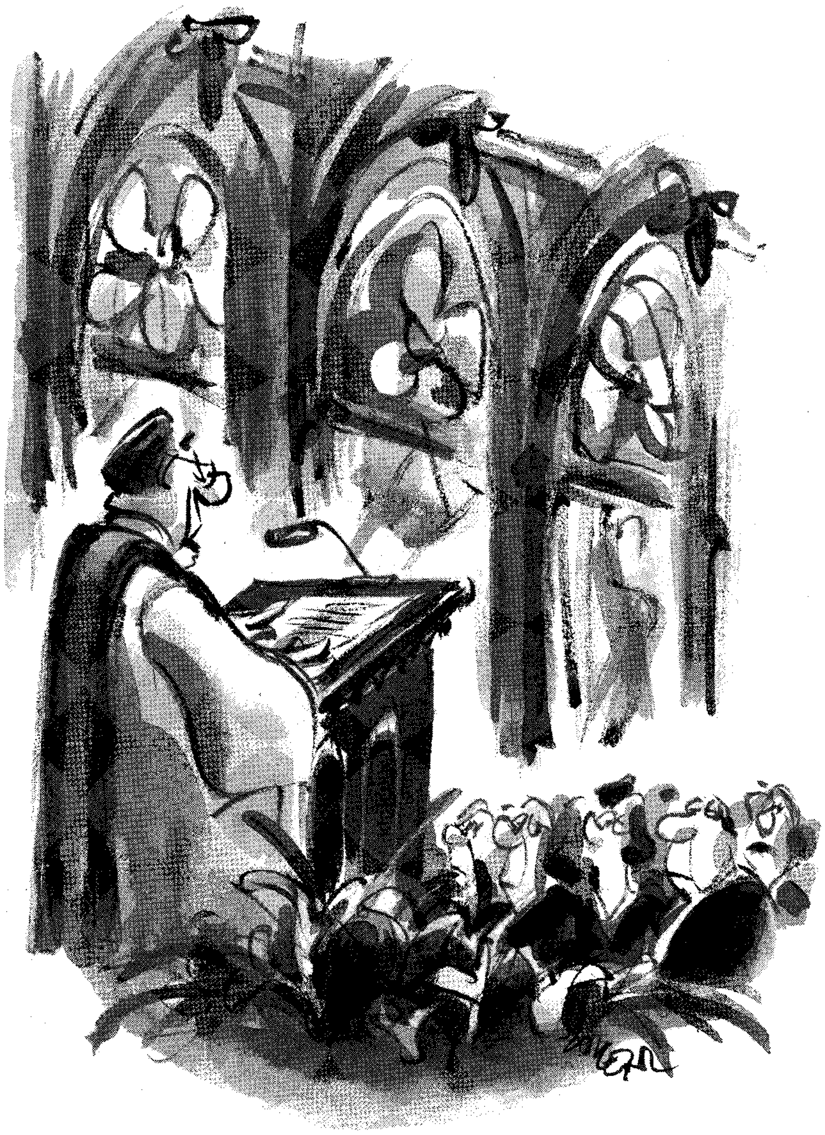
Dhillon eventually managed to link up with what was left of his division; he was reassigned to another unit and joined the retreat of British forces back to Singapore. Other soldiers, like Mohan Singh, had been completely cut off. As Mohan Singh slowly edged away from the road, he met up with other members of the battalion, including the commander, Lieutenant Colonel L. V. Fitzpatrick, who was wounded and shell-shocked. They picked up other Indians in ones and twos until there were nearly two hundred of them. Together they began to work their way deeper into the rubber plantation.

In its geometrical exactness, a stand of rubber trees can be as surreally disorienting as an Escher print. The light is soft, dispersed, and deceptive. Figures and shapes appear and disappear with every step, as rows of trees fall in and out of alignment. Every tree holds the promise of cover, yet there is no point that does not intersect with a perfect line of fire, through a straight tunnel of trunks. The leafy canopy catches the rain and then releases it slowly, prolonging the briefest shower into hours of relentless dripping.

For two days, the soldiers pushed eastward, stealing through the shadows of this murky, treacherous landscape. They came across clusters of tidy, stilt-raised dwellings—Malay villages, where no one had heard of the fighting or of the Japanese. They stumbled into marshes and found themselves floundering, clawing at leeches and sinking deeper into the mud. Mohan Singh spent one night in such a marsh. He wrote later, in a war memoir, that it was there that he asked himself what he was fighting for. He concluded that he was a hired hand, a mercenary: "If at all we Indians were to fight, I silently argued with myself, we should fight for our own freedom. We had no moral reason to fight for the British till they proved their bona-fides by freeing us first."

After three days of wandering, the soldiers ventured into a small town, and there they met up with some Indian civilians. One of them helped Mohan Singh send a message to the headquarters of the Japanese Army: "An Indian Army officer wants to meet you and discuss with you his plans of fighting the British to achieve the freedom of India."

Lieutenant Colonel Fitzpatrick knew



"And the Lord spoke to the children of Israel and said, 'Thou must forswear these practices which are a blasphemy and an abomination in my sight, you know what I'm saying?' "

SILENCE

Rain, all night.
Capacious, like the body of a woman.
And the heat, intolerable.
A cow lows once.

Strong smells of fish and palm-toddy in the air.
One doesn't wish to say anything at all.
How will one cross over?
The water, running out from the feet, ends up nowhere.
The mountain's entire weight rests on the earth's body.

The saints are all silent inside their own truths.
Moss broods silently in the cracks of the stone.
Four-year-old Pratick is silent inside his screams.
Nobody answers him although they surround his fears.

And this evening, too, silent as yesterday,
swaying on its darkness inside the arithmetic of rain.
Into the moist eyes of the young woman clerk, returning home,
a herd of shadows has entered
but somehow isn't able to come out.

How shall the evening star
give forth its light through the clouds?
Somewhere a garden spider
is busy spinning its web.
Your sigh, too, has curled itself up
and lies asleep on a mat in the darkened room.

—JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

nothing of his subordinate's plans. He was a colonial soldier of the old school, with a clipped mustache and a high-domed bald head. The Colonel learned that he had a mutiny on his hands only when Mohan Singh told him bluntly that he and the other men had no intention of going back to the British and were planning to join forces with the Japanese. The Colonel warned Mohan Singh that he was committing treason.

As Mohan Singh describes the scene, the Colonel eventually fell silent, as if looking inward. He said, "Mohan, do you think I have let down my battalion?"

Mohan Singh was evidently moved; he assured the Colonel that he was in no way to blame for what had happened.

The group spent the night in an empty police barracks, and feasted on a meal provided by local Indians. At nine the next morning, two cars pulled into the grounds of the plantation. One was flying the saffron-white-and-green flag of the Congress Party.

Four men got out of the car, three of them Japanese. The most senior Japanese officer introduced himself as Major Iwaichi Fujiwara, but it was the fourth member of the group who commanded Mohan Singh's attention. He was an Indian and a Sikh. Mohan Singh was amazed: the last thing he had expected that morning was to meet a representative of his own faith.

THE Sikh's name was Pritam Singh, and he belonged to a shadowy organization called the Indian Independence League, one of several groups that had long been active among the Indians of the Pacific Rim. These groups had initially taken their direction from an expatriate newsletter published in San Francisco, called *Ghadar*, after a Hindustani word for the 1857 uprising. The people involved with the publication came to be known as the Ghadar Party, and although they had little direct impact on India, their influence on the diaspora of Indians overseas was immense. Much of the Party's support was among Indians who had settled along the Pacific Coast in the United States and Canada in the first decades of the twentieth century; many of them were former Sikh soldiers of the British colonial army. In both countries, these settlers were treated with hostility and suspicion by their neighbors and had to contend with discriminatory laws denying them rights that were routinely accorded to European immigrants. These encounters with racism served ro radicalize many of them: perceiving a link between their treatment abroad and India's subject status, they became ardent nationalists. Some developed links with other anticolonial groups, especially Irish-Americans. In 1920, a contingent of Indian activists marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York. The same year, the Connaught Rangers, an Irish regiment that the British had used in their efforts to suppress nationalist agitation, mutinied in India. Even though the mutiny took the form of a nonviolent protest, fourteen Irish soldiers were sentenced to death.

For decades, Indian revolutionaries abroad concentrated their efforts on turning the colonial army against the British. These tactics met with some success: in 1915, the Ghadar Party had a role in instigating a major mutiny in Singapore. The mutiny was suppressed with the help of the Japanese. Afterward, one of the Singapore mutineers said to a British officer, "Why should we fight for England and be killed in Europe when we are paid half a coolie's wage and our wives and children are left to starve on two or three rupees a month?"

By the late thirties, Indian nationalists had fanned out through East Asia and the Pacific Rim. In order to evade the long reach of Britain's intelligence services, they tended to gravitate toward cities that fell outside the British orbit. Tokyo became the most important of these, and in the early decades of this century it was a haven for nationalist fugitives from all over Asia. Bangkok was another, and it was there, shortly before the start of the Pacific war, that Pritam Singh first met Major Fujiwara, an undercover liaison officer of the Japanese Army. Major Fujiwara was, by all accounts, a man of patent sincerity, who believed that Japan had a duty to liberate the colonized peoples of Asia. His commitment to the cause of India's independence impressed Pritam Singh, and the two men developed a close rapport. Their plan was to organize deserters from the Indian Army into a group that could help the Japanese evict the British from India.

The intentions of Pritam Singh and Major Fujiwara coincided exactly with Mohan Singh's. Shortly after his first meeting with Pritam Singh, Mohan Singh, with active support from Major Fujiwara, founded the Indian National Army.

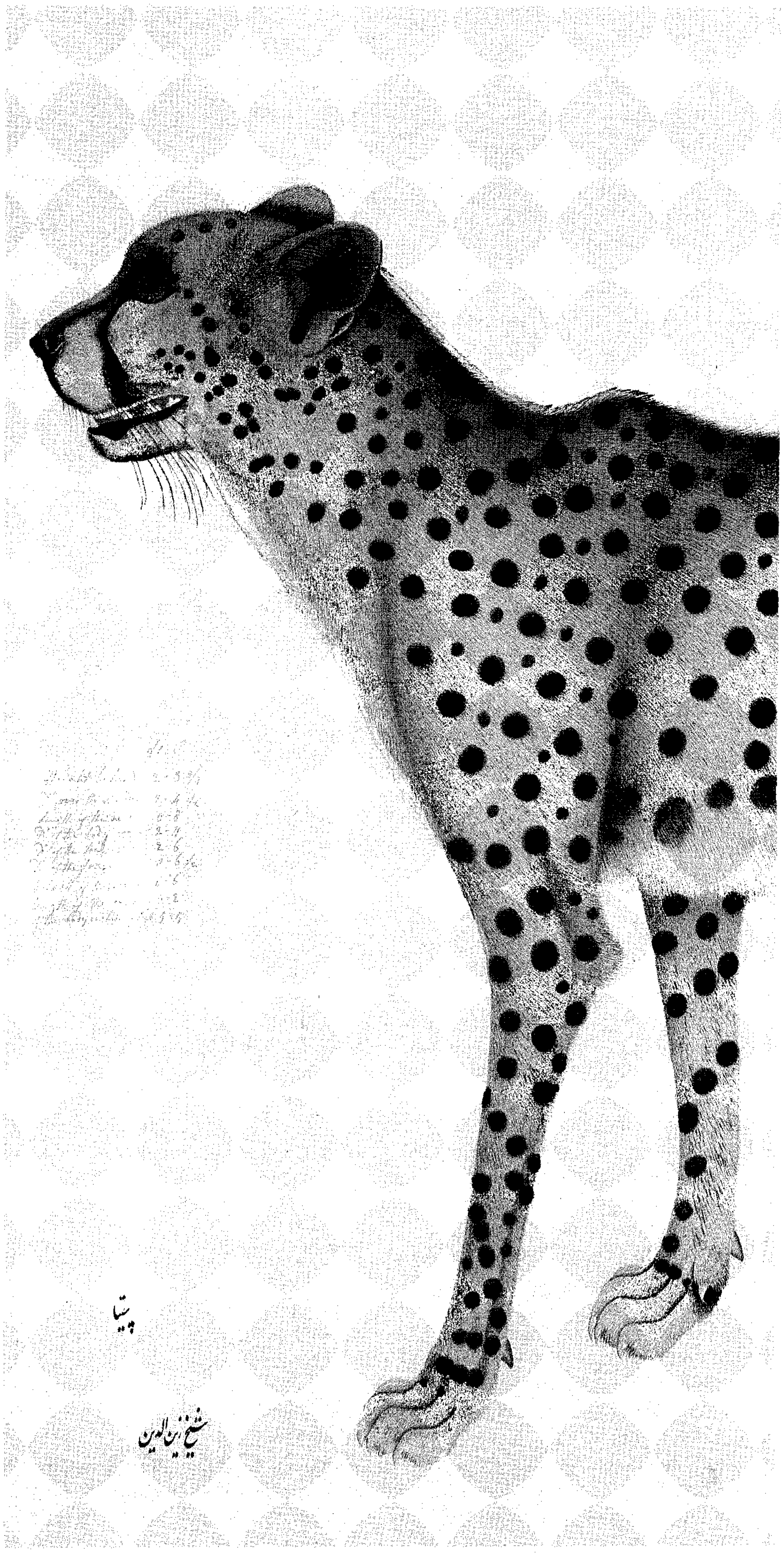
THE Japanese advanced down the Malay Peninsula with startling speed, driving the numerically superior British forces toward Singapore. Singapore was one of the most heavily fortified naval bases in the world, and more than a hundred thousand Allied troops were on the island at the time of the surrender, about half of them from the Indian subcontinent. On February 15, 1942, the commander of the British forces stunned the world by surrendering Singapore to the Japanese.

Dhillon was in Singapore and was shocked by the surrender. "I don't think I felt different from any Britisher," he told me. "There was much anti-British sentiment among us, yet I was crying when I laid down my revolver." The next day, British and Indian soldiers were ordered to separate. The Indians were to congregate at a place called Farrer Park.

Farrer Park, an open, tree-ringed public space that now serves as an arena for after-school soccer games, happens to be situated directly beside the old Indian quarter of Singapore, an uncharacteristically picturesque part of the city, with long rows of "shop houses," brightly painted temples, and restaurants. On the morning of February 17th, some fifty thousand Indian soldiers marched into Farrer Park. Dhillon reached the park at about 11 A.M., to find it already packed with khaki-uniformed Indian soldiers, deployed according to their units. The commander of each unit took roll call and prepared a formal list of the soldiers' parade states, listing their numbers.

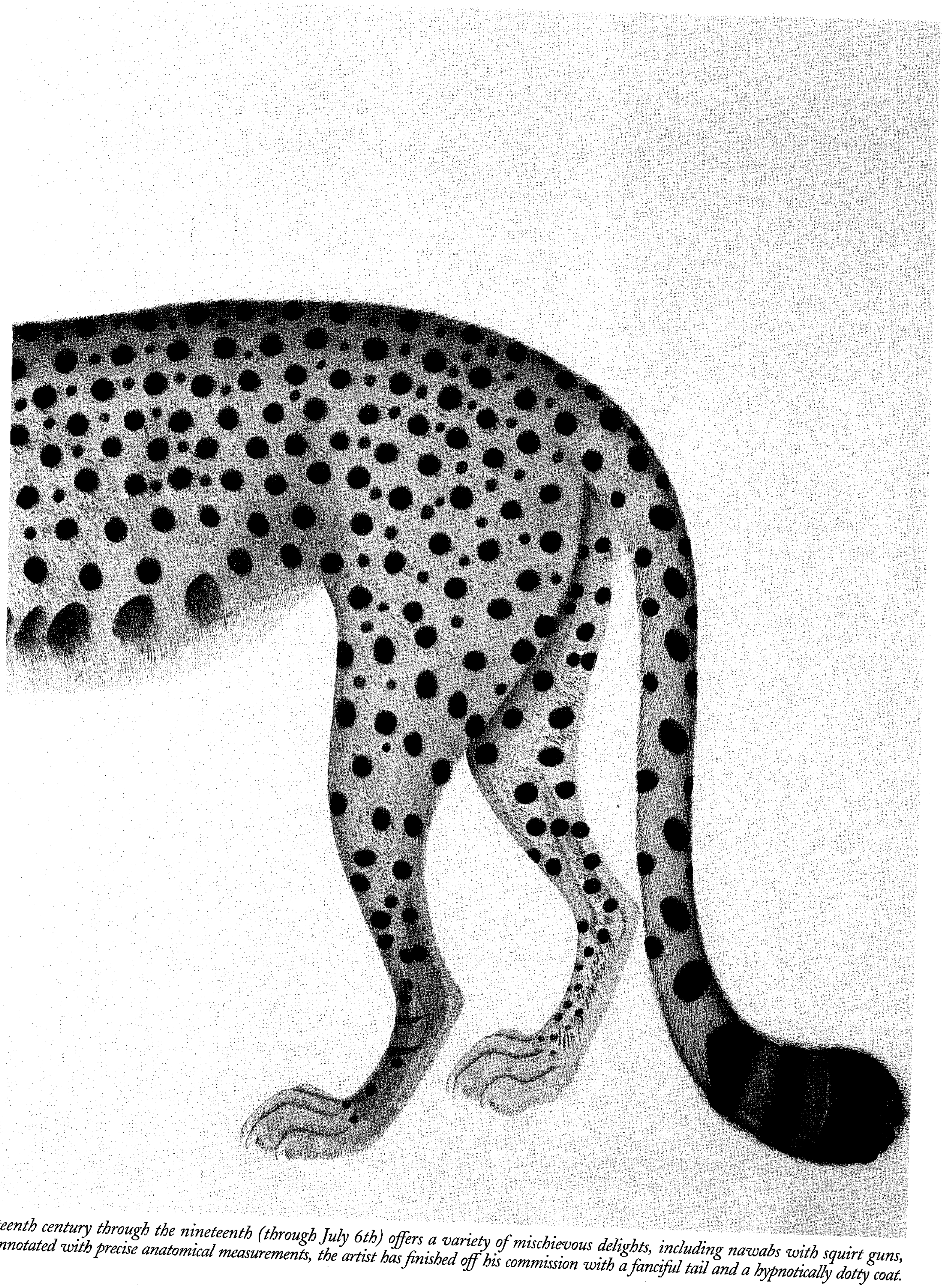
Of the men present, only about two hundred and fifty were officers. They took their places in the front rows, facing a pavilion where an informal stage had been set up, complete with microphones and loudspeakers. At about two in the afternoon, a small group of Indians and Japanese mounted the stage. With them was a British officer, a lieutenant colonel.

The British officer spoke first. He called



PERIOD COSTUME *The Metropolitan Museum's survey of Indian court painting from*
Krishna making off with the blouses of bathers, and this study of a cheetah. Although the render

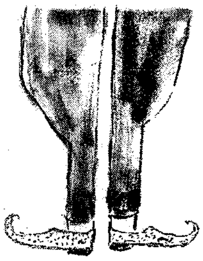
ARTHUR M. SACKLER MUSEUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS, PRIVATE COLLECTION, © PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE



teenth century through the nineteenth (through July 6th) offers a variety of mischievous delights, including nawabs with squirt guns,
annotated with precise anatomical measurements, the artist has finished off his commission with a fanciful tail and a hypnotically dotty coat.

the men to attention and announced that he was handing them over on behalf of General Headquarters, and that they were now to obey the Japanese, as they had previously obeyed the British.

The Indians reacted with horror and outrage: to many it was an even greater blow than the surrender. "It was as if we were being handed over like goats and sheep, from one master to another," Dhillon told me. I was to hear the metaphor repeated by other soldiers who were there that day. The transaction confirmed for many that they had always been only mercenaries, paid enforcers for the British.



The next speaker was Major Fujiwara. He spoke in Japanese, pausing while his words were translated first into English and then into Hindustani. As Dhillon remembers that speech, Major Fujiwara declared that the Japanese had no enmity toward Indians and wished to help all Asian peoples rid themselves of British and Dutch colonialism. He went on to announce the formation of the Indian National Army and the appointment of Mohan Singh as its commander and general. Dhillon had a clear view of the stage, and recognized that his friend Mohan Singh was on it. By the time Major Fujiwara finished his speech, many of the Indian soldiers were cheering.

Mohan Singh was the last to speak. He was, by all accounts, a gifted and persuasive speaker. As Dhillon recalls what he said, the gist was this: "Our forebears fought to keep India enslaved. Now we have a chance to throw off our chains. India's leaders do not want the British in India. Here is an opportunity that may never come again: we must seize it."

Mohan Singh ended by calling on anyone who wished to join or support the Indian National Army to raise his hand. At this point, the park erupted. Men cheered, threw their caps in the air, and shouted anticolonial slogans. The enthusiasm was greatest among the enlisted men: many raised not one hand but two, and some danced where they stood.

KHAZAN SINGH, an enlisted man of twenty-one, was one of the many who raised both hands. Khazan Singh is seventy-seven now, a rubicund, burly man who carries a mobile phone and runs a flourishing brick kiln in a village on the outskirts of New Delhi. I met him in the heart of old Delhi, in a tumbledown office run by survivors of the Indian National Army.

Khazan Singh was sent to Malaya with the British Indian Army in 1941. He was at Jitra when the Japanese broke through, and he joined the general retreat to Singapore. As he recalls, from the very beginning the Indian troops in Malaya had no will to fight. During the withdrawal, he told me with a laugh, "if our officers told us to retreat ten miles, we would go thirty."

Listening to the speeches at Farrer Park, Khazan Singh was conscious of both an acute fear and a heady exhilaration. Mohan Singh was calling for a mutiny on a scale that had only one precedent: the uprising that he knew as the great Ghadar, the Mutiny of 1857. As a child Khazan Singh had heard stories from old men of his village about the British reprisals: they had seen the corpses of the lynched mutineers hanging in public places in Delhi. The sight had driven such fear into their hearts that for eighty years no one in the region had thought of opposing the British.

Yet when Mohan Singh called for a show of hands Khazan Singh threw up both. Fifty-five years after that day in Farrer Park, he raised his arms again to show me how joyfully he had joined this new mutiny.

DHILLON did not join on the spot at Farrer Park, but he trusted Mohan Singh and believed he was right in claiming that there would never be a better opportunity to evict the British from India.

The two other officers who would become Dhillon's co-defendants in the Red Fort trial had more serious misgivings.

Shah Nawaz Khan was the head of the Janjua Rajputs, a Muslim tribe living in what is now the northern part of Pakistan. No family in the entire subcontinent had served the British Indian Army more faithfully than his had: his grandfather fought in the First World War, and his father had been a soldier for thirty years. At the end of the Second World War, more than sixty members of his family were serving in the British Indian Army. For their services to the British Empire, the family had earned considerable rewards in land grants, scholarships, and preferential employment. Shah Nawaz Khan wrote later, "I was brought up to see India through the eyes of a British Officer, and all that I was interested in was soldiering and sport."

Mohan Singh's speech at Farrer Park violated Shah Nawaz Khan's sense of loyalty to the King Emperor and his familial pride. Certain that the Japanese were going to exploit their Indian prisoners, he urged the men to stay away from Mohan Singh. With the help of a group of other Indian officers, he tried to keep Muslim enlisted men from joining the newly formed army.

But Farrer Park and its aftermath were also a political coming of age for Shah Nawaz Khan. He knew that his tribe enjoyed great privileges under the British and had nothing to gain from the end of the Raj. Reflecting on this relationship, he ultimately came to the conclusion that his family had been bought off with (as he put it) "a drop of India's blood." Despite continued misgivings about Mohan Singh, he joined the Indian National Army. Many other Muslim officers also joined. The movement was marked by very amicable interfaith relations. The ties survived Partition, and, even as relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated, the erstwhile rebels maintained close contacts with each other. That legacy persists to this day.

Prem Kumar Sahgal was the last of the three Red Fort defendants to join the Indian National Army. He came from a prominent Hindu family of the Punjab and was a man of unusual charm, wit, and intelligence. The American historian Peter Ward Fay met Prem Sahgal in 1964 while working on an educational-aid project in India. Fay is himself a Second World War veteran. He and Sahgal became close friends, and in 1993 Fay published "The Forgotten Army," a seminal history of the Indian National Army, which was based partly on his conversations with Sahgal. At present, there are no more than fifteen hundred copies of this remarkable work in circulation—a figure that illustrates the amnesia referred to in the title.

According to Fay, Prem Sahgal had a good deal of sympathy for Mohan Singh's cause, but not enough to overcome his distrust of the Japanese. He had a general dislike of authoritarian governments and was appalled by the Japanese record in East Asia. What he had seen of the Japanese in Malaya gave him no confidence that they would live up to their claims as the liberators of Asia. Nor did he believe that Mohan Singh had the political wiles or the strength to stand up to the Japanese.

For eight months after Farrer Park, Prem Sahgal stayed out of the Indian National Army. Then, in August, the Congress Party issued its famous Quit India resolution, which he interpreted as "tantamount to a declaration of war against the British." That very month, Mahatma Gandhi was hustled off to jail, and there were mass arrests across the country. These developments clinched the matter for Prem Sahgal. He later wrote, "Another empire had offered us the arms and the opportunity to fight the British Empire and we naturally accepted it."

THE most enthusiastic recruits and supporters of the Indian National Army came from an entirely different quarter—the Tamil workers of Malaya's rubber plantations. With the Japanese invasion, the closed world of the plantations collapsed. British civilians fled as the Japanese advanced, and, with the departure of the British management staff, many plantations quickly ran out of supplies. Thrown upon their own resources, the workers—about a half million of them, mostly Tamil-speaking descendants of indentured laborers—began to gravitate toward urban centers. Many were illiterate and knew no language other than Tamil.

As the Japanese Army secured more of the Malay Peninsula, members of the Indian Independence League followed, opening offices in small towns and cities. These offices quickly became a refuge from the terrors of the Japanese invasion—shootings, decapitations, beheaded bodies hanging in the streets.

Throughout Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia—not just Malaya but Thailand, French Indochina, and Burma as well—Indians sought out the league's offices. This rallying together seemed to happen spontaneously, even though the Indians of the region were a disparate group. They were divided by language, ethnicity, caste, and religion. Before the war, they would never have gathered under the same roof: they worshipped in different places, ate different kinds of food, and belonged to different clubs, unions, and associations. Still, at this moment of crisis they invented a collective identity centered on the cause of a land that some of them, as second- and third-generation expatriates, had never seen.

Many of these civilians, including several hundred women, joined the rebel army—in fact, they made up nearly half the army's forty thousand troops. Most of the women had been brought up in traditional Indian households, where women rarely worked. At a time when the idea of women in combat units was almost unheard of, they clamored to enlist. "All of us were willing to die," one of those women told me. "There was not one girl in the regiment who was not willing to die."

In March of this year, I travelled across Malaysia and Singapore to meet some of the expatriate Indians who had taken part in the rebellion. I talked to many who had grown up in and around the rubber estates. "Slavery" was the term they invariably used to describe the life of prewar plantation workers. Many of these workers joined the rebel army because they saw a direct connection between their own situation and that of their country of origin: they believed that they would never be treated with respect as long as India remained a colony. For them the rebellion was something like a Jacquerie—a peasant revolt.

The men and women I met wept, almost without exception, as they recalled the exhilaration of those days. This was the first time in their lives that they had been something other than an invisible underclass; in the rebel training camps, living with people of many different castes, regions, and religions, many had their first experience of comradeship.

In a Kuala Lumpur café, an eighty-year-old man who had almost died fighting in Burma told me, with tears streaming down his cheeks, "I had no one here in Malaya, no family—nothing. In the Indian National Army I found myself surrounded by brothers and sisters. We all ate together—there were no differences between us. There were so many of us, but we were the children of one mother. If I am reborn ten times, I will not know such happiness again."

Nowhere was the Indian National Army to have more tangible effects than in Malaysia. After the war, some of the group's senior personnel formed the Malayan Indian Congress, now the Malaysian Indian Congress, which has been a constituent member of the country's

"Emily, a Mr. Barnes and a Mr. Noble would like a word with you."

government for decades. Another offshoot was a coöperative for some sixty thousand plantation workers, which today is a multimillion-dollar enterprise and owns one of the sleekest skyscrapers in Kuala Lumpur. Its chief executive officer, K. R. Somasundaram, joined the Indian National Army's youth wing at the age of fifteen. Sitting in a magnificent office overlooking the city, he told me, with a smile and a shrug, "I would not be here today if I had not joined the Indian National Army. If there is any Indian leadership at all in this country, it is because of the movement."

NOT everyone, of course, joined the Indian National Army out of conviction or commitment. Some defected at the first opportunity. Others had regrets later. Many eventually repudiated the Indian National Army, claiming that they had been coerced, and even tortured, into joining it. These allegations were widely aired after the war and played an important part in the Red Fort trial.

It is clear, however, that many Indians were torn by the choice that faced them. The idea that individuals owe loyalty to a single political entity is relatively recent, and probably connected with the comparably recent birth of the nation-state. But human loyalties are, and always have been, diverse. People are capable of being faithful to many things at once: not just to their families, their kin, their compatriots but also to their masters, their servants, their friends, their colleagues, and, sometimes, even their enemies.

The burden of undivided loyalty weighs hardest upon the soldier, in whom neither custom nor law will tolerate the slightest ambiguity of allegiance. The form this loyalty assumes is patriotism—absolute fidelity to country. Emblazoned on the walls of the Indian Military Academy were the words "The honour, welfare and safety of your country comes first, always and every time." And yet what *was* the country to which a colonial soldier owed his allegiance? There was no political entity to which Indian soldiers could give their undivided, heartfelt allegiance: they stood on the cusp of a vast historical transition, and betrayal was implicit in all the available alternatives.

The choice presented in Farrer Park was so stark that it evidently served to deepen rather than resolve the conflicting loyalties of some soldiers, who could not bring themselves to renounce their sworn pledge of loyalty to the British Empire, or who were able to renounce it but only halfheartedly. Yet the events of Farrer Park amounted to a conversion. Having devoted their lives to attitudes of deference and respect, the colonial soldiers suddenly became defiant to the point of foolhardiness.

Such attitudes were carried into the prison camps. Many of these soldiers, when captured, taunted their Indian captors, calling them mercenaries; others flatly refused to coöperate. Sometimes they fell out with their Japanese fellow-prisoners, who generally took a more submissive attitude. "The Indian National Army has not stopped fighting," the Indians would tell the Japanese. "Until the last man falls, the fight goes on."

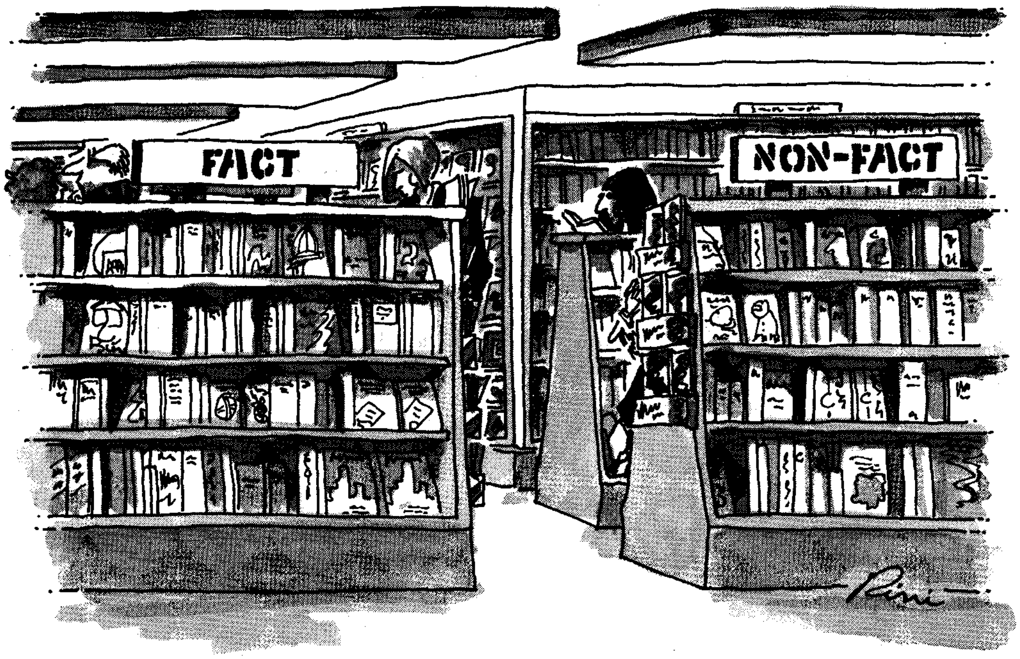
IN the end, the Indian National Army would need Subhas Chandra Bose. A mere ten months after the meeting at Farrer Park, its founding leader, Mohan Singh, was arrested by the Japanese. A council of Indian representatives had called on the Japanese to make an unconditional commitment to Indian sovereignty, and the Japanese had balked. Their response was to imprison Mohan Singh—now General Singh—and remove him to Sumatra, where he spent the rest of the war.

The Indian National Army could not survive without effective leadership. And there was only one possible leader with the necessary stature and credibility outside India at that time—Subhas Chandra Bose.

Bose arrived in Southeast Asia on July 2, 1943, after travelling from Germany by submarine. He was forty-six years old, a Cambridge-educated Bengali who had been at war with the Raj for decades. He had participated in Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent campaign early in his political career and remained an admirer all his life. But over time his own tactical thinking had become, as it were, the inverse of Gandhi's.

Gandhi's faith in nonviolence was founded on the belief that no worthwhile end can be achieved by the use of morally compromised means. For Bose no means were unacceptable so long as they contributed to the overthrow of the Raj. He

CLOSED FOR VACATION
Levin



believed that Britain's enemies were his natural allies, and he had no qualms about seeking their help.

The British, for their part, treated Bose with untiring, vengeful hostility, jailing him repeatedly. In January, 1941, he slipped out of his Calcutta home in disguise, and made his way across the Indian subcontinent to Afghanistan. He made approaches to the Soviet Union and, upon being rebuffed, travelled to Hitler's Germany, in another vain attempt to garner support for India's independence.

According to Bose's biographer Leonard Gordon, "Bose made a mistake and knew he made a mistake very shortly after going to Germany. He was treated so badly in Germany that he was very depressed and wanted to get out of there, and finally it worked out when the Indian National Army officers asked the Japanese high command that he be sent to Asia."

At a solemn ceremony in Singapore's Cathay Theatre, Bose took over the leadership of the Indian National Army. He was a mesmerizing orator. He adopted a military style of dress, complete with jackboots, and took the title "Netaji," or "Leader." Within a short time, he had galvanized the Indian National Army. He was also effective in representing the Indian point of view to the Japanese: he quickly succeeded in extracting from them assurances of independence, autonomy, and equality that had previously eluded the Indian leadership. During the remaining twenty months of his life, he gave the Army a new sense of purpose. His influence on the civilian population of Southeast Asia was even more impressive. Thousands of Indians turned out to greet him everywhere he went: when he asked for donations, women gave away their bangles and necklaces; when he called for volunteers, the response was so great that the Indian National Army's recruiting offices were clogged for days. It was Bose who conceived of a women's regiment—an idea that met with both ridicule and opposition from the Japanese.

Bose moved his headquarters to Rangoon at the end of 1943. A few months later, in March of 1944, the Japanese launched their assault on India, to which the Indian National Army committed about nine thousand troops. By mid-June, it was clear that the invasion attempt had failed, and shortly afterward the British began their own push into Burma.

The Japanese resisted for another year, but after the Battle of Meiktila, in February, 1945, the Japanese defense collapsed, and the British moved rapidly on toward Rangoon. With a sizable entourage of troops and officials, Bose made his way overland to Thailand. On August 18th, twelve days after the bombing of Hiroshima, with the fog of war hanging heavy over Southeast Asia, he boarded a plane at Da Nang, in Vietnam. The plane crashed near Taipei later that day. Bose suffered extensive burns and died soon afterward; his escort, an Indian National Army officer, survived and stayed at his bedside until the end.

The aura of mystery that surrounded Bose's death created a cult of adulation and hero worship, complete with conspiracy theories and reported sightings. But Bose's detractors were no less passionate than his supporters, and the controversies that had followed his career continued long after his death.

"All the wishful thinking about what India might have been gets projected onto Subhas Bose now," Partha Chatterjee, a prominent historian and political theorist, told me recently, in Calcutta. "He's become a symbol of all the alternative possibilities of modern India. Everything that's gone wrong is blamed on his enemies."

Over the last several years, many of Bose's former critics have changed their views. In January, the government of India formally "rehabilitated" Bose, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of his birth with much official fanfare. But for some Indians the official celebrations served only to reinforce the ambivalence surrounding his memory.

In New Delhi, I spoke to Ashish Nandy, a psychoanalyst and one of India's leading intellectuals. "Bose is one of the most tragic figures in Indian history," he said. "He was a nationalist, but his categories were mostly Western. He was the unwitting inventor of a style of demagogic politics that has led to a lot of violence in contemporary India. Bose was a very 'torn person.' He represents everything that we are afraid of in ourselves."

Today, it is principally as a rebel that Bose lives in popular memory. Among his most fervent admirers are members of insurgent groups in Nagaland, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir.

THE colonial government's precise reasons for choosing the three defendants in the Red Fort trial are still unclear. There were scores of Indian National Army officers in British custody, and many could have been tried on similar charges. According to Peter Fay, "British intelligence sources show that there was a calculated campaign on the part of the colonial government to paint the Indian National Army people as a bunch of traitors and ruffians. They wanted to link these men with atrocities and brutalities of the kind that were practiced by the Japanese. They thought the Indian public would turn against the Indian National Army if they could prove that it had behaved in a cruel and unforgivable manner with fellow-Indians. Since all these three had ordered executions, they were chosen for the trial."

In their last battles, all three had been involved in military executions. Prem Sahgal had convened a hasty court-martial after deserters had led British troops back to their base, and Dhillon was given the charge of carrying out the order. Shah Nawaz, too, had passed a sentence of execution on a soldier who tried to instigate desertions. These sentences were based on provisions of the Indian National Army's legal code, which was modelled on the British Army's. The British government did not, of course, recognize the validity of the laws under which the executions had been carried out. The charges of murder and abetment against the three defendants thus became a test of the legality of the Indian National Army itself.

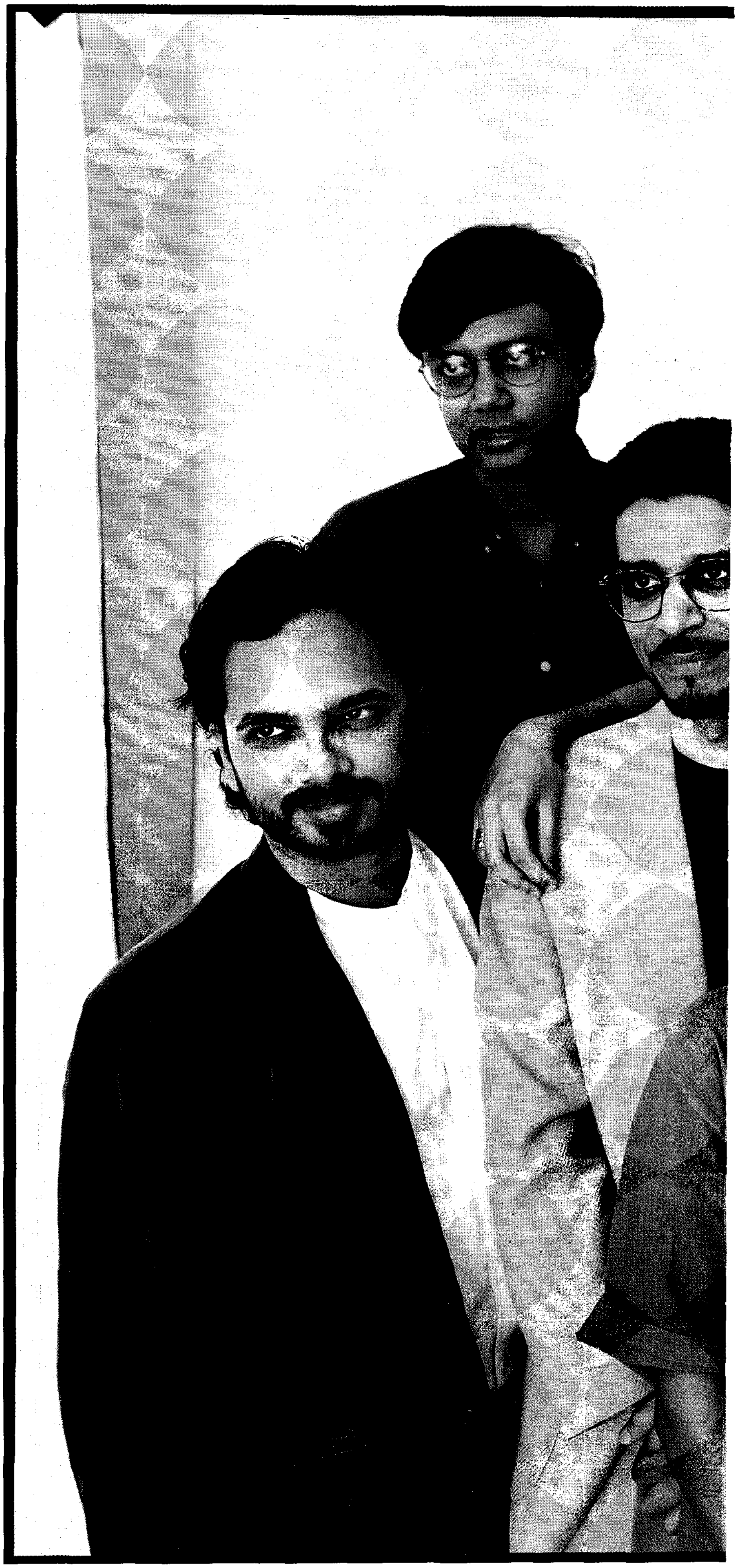
The government's case was argued by the Advocate General of India, Sir Naushirwan Engineer, a distinguished Parsi barrister. From the start, his argument was that the Indian National Army was indeed a rebel army, which had deliberately taken up arms against the British Empire in order to "wage war against the King." To prove this, he called a series of witnesses to testify to the Indian National Army's financial and administrative structure, its legal system, and so on.

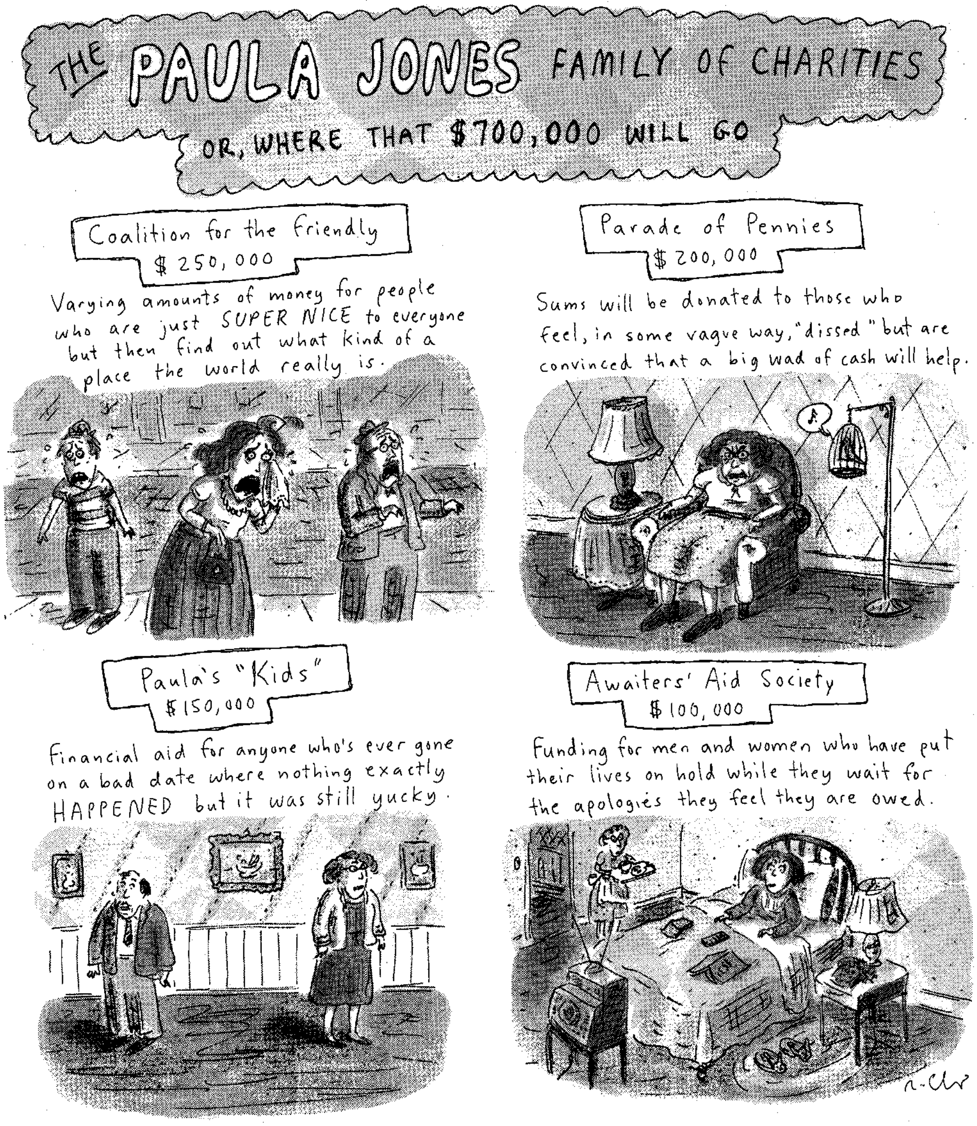
Whatever its legal strengths, his strategy was a political disaster. The more thoroughly Sir Naushirwan established his case, the more he added to the Indian National Army's popularity and appeal. Until

GROUP SHOT

A gathering of India's leading novelists. Bottom row: Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, and Anita Desai. Top row: Amit Chaudhuri, Kiran Desai, Ardashir Vakil, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, and Romesh Gunesekera (who is Sri Lankan).

Photograph by Max Vadukul.
London, May 30, 1997.




THE PAULA JONES FAMILY OF CHARITIES
OR, WHERE THAT $700,000 WILL GO
Coalition for the Friendly
$ 250,000
Varying amounts of money for people who are just SUPER NICE to everyone but then find out what kind of a place the world really is.
Parade of Pennies
$ 200,000
Sums will be donated to those who feel, in some vague way, "dissed" but are convinced that a big wad of cash will help.
Paula's "Kids"
$ 150,000
Financial aid for anyone who's ever gone on a bad date where nothing exactly HAPPENED but it was still yucky.
Awaiters' Aid Society
$ 100,000
Funding for men and women who have put their lives on hold while they wait for the apologies they feel they are owed.
R. Chast

the start of the trial, the details of the Indian National Army's functioning were still unknown to most Indians, and, as the trial progressed, every piece of fresh evidence served to enhance the authority of Bose's government in exile. The country erupted with protests and demonstrations. Support committees were formed all over India, despite an official ban. General strikes spread through entire provinces. Students held public meetings defying curfew orders. In the southern city of Madura, two people died when the police opened fire on a demonstration. In Calcutta, tens of thousands of people poured into the streets and took over the city for several days. Dozens were shot by the police.

For the Congress Party, the trial was a windfall. It was being held at a time when the Party's organization was moribund, with its leaders only just released after long jail terms. It had lost the momentum of the prewar years and badly needed an issue to mobilize support.

The prosecution soon ran into other problems as well. The defendants, who had refused to recognize the legality of the court, flatly denied the murder charges, and the prosecution could produce only circumstantial evidence. It also ran aground on the issue of brutality, having no evidence that linked the Indian National Army with Japanese atrocities in Southeast Asia, or with mistreatment of any British or Australian prisoners of war. While it did prove that some Indian prisoners had been mistreated, none of these cases had any connection to the three defendants.

On December 17, 1945, Bhulabhai Desai rose to make his defense address. "What is now on trial before the court," he said, "is the right to wage war with immunity on the part of a subject race for their liberation." There was essentially only one charge against his clients, he argued—that of waging war against the King. All the other charges, he claimed, were derived from the first.

Desai had set himself the task of demonstrating that international law recognized the right of subject peoples to wage war for their freedom. Citing a series of precedents, he showed that the British government had itself recognized this right, when expedient, in cases that dated back to the nineteenth century. It had, for example, supported the Greeks and a number of other nationalities in rebellions against the Ottoman Empire; more recently, it had supported the Polish National Army and the Czechoslovak rebels; similarly, America's General Dwight Eisenhower had insisted on the right of the French Maquis to be treated as belligerents even though the regime of Marshal Pétain was at that time the de-jure and de-facto government of France. Desai quoted even Churchill: Had not the Allies conducted the Second World War with the promise of freedom for the world's peoples? If Indian soldiers could be transported to the far corners of the world to fight for the liberty of other peoples, could they be barred from taking up arms for their own freedom?

There was, of course, the final question of allegiance. Every rebellion, every declaration of independence, Bhulabhai Desai argued, implied a repudiation of a prior allegiance. And here he played his trump card. In 1776, Britain's ally, the United States, had also been bound to its mother country by a tie of allegiance. Desai read the passage from the Declaration of Independence which repudiated that allegiance: "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

Desai took the court back to Singapore and February 17, 1942. It was in Farrer Park, he argued, that the Indians of the colonial army had repudiated their prior allegiance.

Several weeks passed before the court reached its verdict. The defendants were taken to the Red Fort on the afternoon of January 3, 1946, under heavy guard. The security precautions were so elaborate that they prepared for the worst. "In our minds," Colonel Dhillon says, "we were ready for a sentence of execution."

At the Red Fort, three British officers with drawn swords marched them to the presence of Lieutenant Colonel P. Walsh, the military prosecutor. A sealed envelope lay on the desk before him. The three Indians stood at attention as the Colonel opened the envelope and read the verdict out loud.

All three were found guilty on the charge of "waging war against the King." On the charges of murder and abetment, Prem Kumar Sahgal and Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon were found not guilty; Shah Nawaz Khan was found guilty of abetment. All three were sentenced to transportation for life.

But there was more. With surprise blooming on his face, Colonel Walsh began to read from a sheet of paper signed by none other than the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck: it was an order commuting the sentences of all three men.

"Well, gentlemen," Dhillon remembers the Colonel saying, "you are free. Where would you like to go?"

A month after the sentencing, ratings in the Royal Indian Navy mutinied in the port cities of Bombay and Karachi. This was followed by a mutiny in the Air Force.

My father is one of the many Indians who believe that the British would not have left India if this cycle of mutiny had not come full circle.

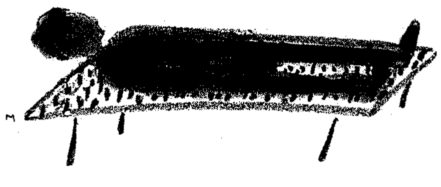
The army that figured in Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon's stories was very different from the force that my father had told me about. This was partly because the British Indian Army had undergone substantial reforms by the time my father joined it. The British had been quick to learn their lessons from the fall of Singapore. Several measures that British officialdom had resisted before the war were quickly enacted after the Japanese victories. By the time my father joined, the Army's pay structures had been revised and Indian food was being served in the officers' messes. Although the highest echelons of military leadership were still British, there were more Indians in the middle levels of the command structure.

Dhillon's stories centered on racism of a kind that my father had never talked about. Recently, in Calcutta, I told him what I had heard from Indian National Army officers about the humiliations that they had had to put up with.

My father fell silent, and then he told me something that he had never mentioned before. In 1944, during the fighting at Kohima, one of his superiors, a South African, called him a "bloody nigger." My father lost his temper, picked up a wrench, and struck the South African with it, felling him. Some Indian enlisted men happened to witness this incident and they cheered.

My father knew that he was in serious trouble: what he had done amounted almost to mutiny. He went back to his tent and "loosened his belt," expecting to be stripped of his rank and sent to a lockup to await court-martial. Nothing happened. The next day, he was called up by his commanding officer and given a mild reproof—something to the effect that he should not have acted as he did, no matter what the provocation. My father was dazed. The commanding officer was letting him off, he realized, for fear of provoking a more serious incident: the officers were well aware that they were balancing on a rope that was stretching thinner and thinner.

Long before Kohima, the British high command had taken a good look at the Jiffs and decided that they signalled the end of the game—at least, as far as the colonial army was concerned. Fay quotes a report by an intelligence officer who conducted an investigation into the Indian National Army. "It is plain that we have come to a parting of the ways," the report says. "We cannot recover what has been lost. It is useless to try to educate Indian officers in the enduring virtues of the Raj." These words were written in 1942, the year my father joined the Military Academy. I asked him, "If you had known about the Indian National Army, about who they were and what they were fighting for, would you have mutinied?"



My father shrugged. "Some people would have, I'm sure. But the fact is we didn't know—they didn't let us know anything about the Indian National Army. We called them Jiffs. They were starving and covered with sores, and we never knew whether they were to be believed or not."

Later, I put the same question to one of my father's close friends, who had also fought in the Burma campaign for the British Indian Army. He was less equivocal. "If we'd known, we would have mutinied on the spot," he said with a laugh. "But you have to hand it to the British. They were experts at handling people. They never let us find out."

I found myself wondering about what it takes to acknowledge to yourself that you had, as it were, fought against your will, because you had been successfully manipulated and lied to.

My father never used the word "racism" in his stories, and in this he was not unrepresentative of his generation of Indians. In part, I suspect, this collective silence was a product of a sense of shame in their subjection to governance that was, at its core, evil—"satanic," in Gandhi's words. But it was also the silence of collusion—mute recognition that many aspects of that evil would be projected into the future.

I came of age long after Independence, and I had no direct experience of colonialism. I grew up in an India that, despite all its problems, was a vigorous, noisy, rapidly changing nation. In my generation, we reserved our ire for the present, for the country's visible failures. The country that Colonel Dhillon and my father had inhabited was utterly unlike the India I grew up in. This was something that my father had known instinctively: he knew that I would not understand the secret compacts, the silences, and the subterfuges that surrounded the life of his generation. His silence, like Independence itself, had spared me that knowledge.

For the world outside, and for Britain in particular, the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence has become an occasion for a huge outpouring of Raj nostalgia. In India, on the other hand, there is a noticeable lack of enthusiasm, or even interest, in the event.

For India, fifty years is not long enough. ♦

FICTION

THE FIREBIRD'S NEST

What's to be done about the women? They just burn too easily. Turn your back and they're alight.

BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

Now I am ready to tell how bodies are
changed
Into different bodies.
—*Ovid, Metamorphoses; translated by Ted Hughes.*

It is a hot place, flat and sere. The rains have failed so often that now they say instead, the drought succeeded. They are plainsmen, livestock farmers, but their cattle are deserting them. The cattle, staggering, migrate south and east in search of water, and rattle as they walk. Their skulls, horned mile posts, line the route of their vain exodus. There is water to the west, but it is salt. Soon even these marshes will have given up the ghost. Tumbleweed blows across the leached gray flats. There are cracks big enough to swallow a man.

An apt enough way for a farmer to die: to be eaten by his land.

Women do not die in that way. Women catch fire, and burn.

Within living memory, a thick forest stood here, Mr. Maharaj tells his American bride as the limousine drives toward his palace. A rare breed of tiger lived in the forest, white as salt, wiry, small. And songbirds! A dozen dozen varieties; their very nests were built of music. Half a century ago, his father riding through the forest would hum along with their arias, could hear the tigers joining in the choruses. But now his father is dead, the tigers are extinct, and the birds have all gone, except one, which never sings a note and, in the absence of trees, makes its nest in a secret place that has not been revealed. The firebird, he whispers, and his bride, a child of a big city, a foreigner, no virgin, laughs at such exotic melodramatics, tossing her long bright hair; which is yellow, like a flame.

There are no princes now. The government abolished them decades ago. The very idea of princes has become, in our modern country, a fiction, something from the time of feudalism, of fairy tale. Their titles, their privileges have been stripped from them. They have no power over us. In this place, the prince has become plain Mr. Maharaj. He is a complex man. His palace in the city has become a casino, but he heads a commission that seeks to extirpate the public corruption that is the country's bane. In his youth he was a mighty sportsman, but since his retirement he has had no time for games. He heads an ecological institute studying, and seeking remedies for, the drought; but at his country residence, at the great fortress-palace to which this limousine is taking him, cascades of precious water flow ceaselessly, for no other purpose than display. His library of ancient texts is the wonder of the province, yet he also controls the local satellite franchises, and profits from every new dish. The details of his finances, like those of his many rumored romances, are obscure.

Here is a quarry. The limousine halts. There are men with pickaxes and women bearing earth in metal bowls upon their heads. When they see Mr. Maharaj they make gestures of respect, they genuflect, they bow. The American bride, watching, intuits that she has passed into a place in which that which was abolished is the truth, and it is the government, far away in the capital, that is the fiction in which nobody believes. Here Mr. Maharaj is still the prince, and she, his new princess. As though she had entered a fable, as though she were no more than words crawling along a dry page, or as though she were becoming that page itself, that surface on which her story would be written, and across which there blew a hot and merciless wind, turning her body to papyrus, her skin to parchment, her soul to paper.

It is so hot. She shivers.

It is no quarry. It is a reservoir. Farmers, driven from their land by drought, have been employed by Mr. Maharaj to dig this water hole against the day when the rains return. In this way he can give them some employment, he tells his bride, and more than employment: hope. She shakes her head, seeing that this great hollow is already full; of bitter irony. Briny, brackish, no use to man or cow.

The women in the reservoir of irony are dressed in the colors of fire. Only the foolish, blinded by language's conventions, think of fire as red, or gold. Fire is blue at its melancholy rim, green in its envious heart. It may burn white, or even, in its greatest rages, black.

Yesterday, the men with pickaxes tell Mr. Maharaj, a woman in a red-and-gold sari, a fool, ignited in the amphitheatre of the dry water hole. The men stood along the high rim of the reservoir, watching her burn, shouldering arms in a kind of salute; recognizing, in the wisdom of their manhood, the inevitability of women's fate. The women, their women, screamed.

When the woman finished burning there was nothing there. Not a scrap of flesh, not a bone. She burned as paper burns, flying up to the sky and being blown into nothing by the wind.

The combustibility of women is a source of resigned wonder to the men hereabouts. They just burn too easily, what's to be done about it? Turn your back and they're alight. Perhaps it is a difference between the sexes, the men say. Men are earth, solid, enduring, but the ladies are capricious, unstable; they are not long for this world; they go off in a puff of smoke without leaving so much as a note of explanation. And in this heat, if they should spend too long in the sun! We tell them to stay indoors, not to expose themselves to danger, but you know how women are. It is their fate, their nature.

Even the demure ones have fiery hearts; perhaps the demure ones most of all, Mr. Maharaj murmurs to his wife in the limousine. She is a woman of modern outlook and does not like it, she tells him, when he speaks this way, herding her sex into these crude corrals, these easy generalizations, even in jest. He inclines his head in amused apology. A firebrand, he says. I see I must mend my ways.

See that you do, she commands, and nestles comfortably under his arm. His gray beard brushes her brow.

GOSSIP burns ahead of her. She is rich, as rich as the old, obese Nizam of ———, who was weighed in jewels on his birthdays and so was able to increase taxes simply by putting on weight. His subjects would quake as they saw his banquets, his mighty *halvas*, his towering jellies, his *kulfi* Himalayas, for they knew that the endless avalanche of delicacies sliding down the Nizam's gullet meant that the food on their own tables would be sparse and plain, as he wept with exhausted repletion so their children would weep with hunger, his gluttony would be their famine. Yes, filthy rich, the gossip sizzles, her American father claims descent from the deposed royal family of an Eastern European state, and each year he flies the élite employees of his commercial empire by private aircraft to his lost kingdom, where by the banks of the River of Time itself he stages a four-day golf tournament, and then, laughing, contemptuous, godlike, fires the champion, destroys his life for the hubris of aspiring to glory, abandons him by the shores of Time's River, into whose tumultuous, deadly waters the champion finally dives, and is lost, like hope, like a ball.

She is rich; she is a fertile land; she will bring sons, and rain.

No, she is poor, the gossip flashes, her father hanged himself when she was born, her mother was a whore, she also is a creature of wildernesses and rocky ground, the drought is in her body, like a curse, she is barren, and has come in the hope of stealing brown babies from their homes and nursing them from bottles, since her own breasts are dry.

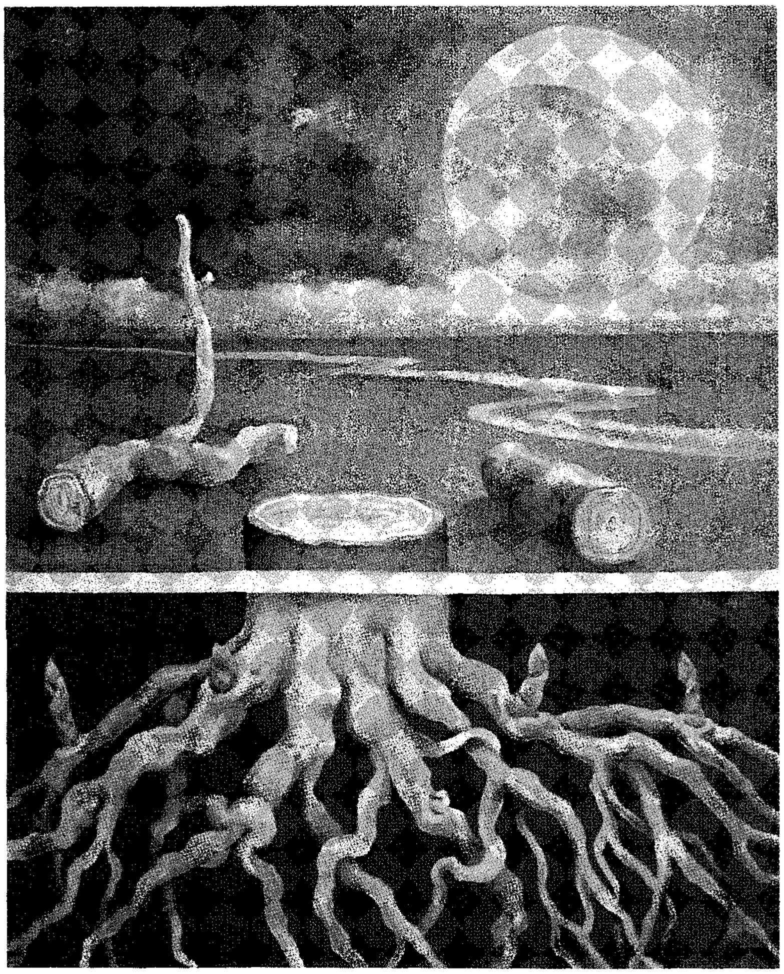
Mr. Maharaj has searched the world for its treasures and brought back a magic jewel whose light will change their lives. Mr. Maharaj has fallen into iniquity and brought Despair into his palace, has succumbed to yellow-haired doom.

So she is becoming a story the people tell, and argue over. Travelling toward the palace, she, too, is aware of entering a story, a group of stories about women such as herself, fair and yellow, and the dark men they loved. She was warned by friends at home, in her tall city. Do not go with him, they cautioned her. If you sleep with him, he will not respect you. He does not think of women like you as wives. Your otherness excites him, your freedom. He will break your heart.

Though he calls her his bride, she is not his wife. So far, she feels no fear.

A ruined gateway stands in the wilderness, an entrance to nowhere. A single tree, the last of all the local trees to fall, lies rotting beside it, the exposed roots grabbing at air like a dead giant's hand. A wedding party passes, and the limousine slows. She sees that the turbaned groom, on his way to meet his wife, is not young and eager, but wisp-haired, old and parched; she imagines a tale of undying love, long denied by circumstance, overcoming adversity at last. Somewhere an elderly sweetheart awaits her wizened amour. They have loved each other always, she imagines, and now near their stories' conclusion they have found this happy ending. By accident she speaks these words aloud. Mr. Maharaj smiles and shakes his head. The bridegroom's bride is young, a virgin from a distant village.

Why would a pretty young girl wish to marry an old fool?



B.P. KAMBOJ, "THE END?" COURTESY ABHINAV PUBLICATIONS

Mr. Maharaj shrugs. The old fellow will have settled for a small dowry, he replies, and if one has many daughters such factors have much weight. As for the oldster, he adds, in a long life there may be more than a single dowry. These things add up.

Flutes and horns blow raucous music in her direction. A drum crumps like cannon fire. Transsexual dancers heckle her through the window. *Ohé*, America, they screech, *arré*, howdy-podner, say what? O.K., you take care now, I'm-a-yankee-doodle-dandy! Ooh, baby, wah-wah, maximum cool, Miss America, shake that thing! She feels a sudden panic. Drive faster, she cries, and the driver accelerates. Dust explodes around the wedding party, hiding it from view. Mr. Maharaj is solicitude personified, but she is angry with herself. Excuse me, she mutters. It's nothing. The heat.

("AMERICA." Once upon a time in "America," they had shared an Indian lunch three hundred feet above street level, at a table with a view of the vernal lushness of the park, feasting their eyes upon an opulence of vegetation that now, as she remembers it in this desiccated landscape, feels obscene. My country is just like yours, he'd said, flirting. Big, turbulent, and full of gods. We speak our kind of bad English and you speak yours. And before you became Romans, when you were just colonials, our masters were the same. You defeated them before we did. So now you have more money than we do. Otherwise, we're the same. On your street corners the same bustle of differences, the same litter, the same everything-at-onceness. She guessed immediately what he was telling her: that he came from a place unlike anything she had ever experienced, whose languages she would struggle to master, whose codes she might never break, and whose immensity and mystery would provoke and fulfill her greatest passion and her deepest need.

Because she was an American, he spoke to her of money. The old protectionist legislation, the outdated socialism that had hobbled the economy for so long, had been dismantled and there were fortunes to be made if you had the ideas. Even a prince had to be on the ball, one step ahead of the game. He was bursting with projects, and she had a reputation in financial circles as a person who could bring together capital and ideas, who could conjure up, for her favored projects, the monetary nourishment they required.

A "rainmaker."

She took him to the opera, was aroused, as always, by the power of great matters sung of in words she could not understand, whose meaning had to be inferred from the performers' deeds. Then she took him home and seduced him. It was her city, her stage, and she was confident, and young. As they began to make love, she guessed that she was about to leave behind everything she knew, all the roots of her self. Her lovemaking became ferocious, as if his body were a locked gateway to the unknown, and she must batter it down.

Not everything will be wonderful, he warned her. There is a terrible drought.)

HIS palace, unfortunately, is abominable. It crumbles, stinks. In her room, the curtains are tattered, the bed precarious, the pictures on the wall pornographic representations of arabesque couplings at some petty princeling's court. No way of knowing if these are her husband's ancestors or a job lot purchased from a persuasive peddler. Loud music plays in ill-lit corridors, but she cannot find its source. Shadows scurry from her sight. He installs her, vanishes without an explanation. She is left to make herself at home.

That night, she sleeps alone. A ceiling fan stirs the hot, syrupy air. It simmers, like a soup. She cannot stop thinking of "home": its nocturnal sirens, its cooling machinery. Its reification of the real. Amid that surplus of structures, of content, it is not easy for the phantasmagoric to gain the upper hand. Our entertainment is full of monsters, of the fabulous, because outside the darkened cinemas, beyond the pages of the books, away from the gothic decibels of the music, the quotidian is inescapable, omnipotent. We dream of other dimensions, of paranoid subtexts, of underworlds, because when we awake the actual holds us in its great thingy grasp and we cannot see beyond the material, the event horizon. Whereas here, caught in the empty bubbling of dry air, afraid of roaches, all your frontiers may crumble; are crumbling. The possibility of the terrible is renewed.

WmHamilton

"I love it. Unspeakable, but accessible."

She has never found it easy to weep, but her body convulses. She cries dry tears, and sleeps. When she awakes there is the sound of a drum, and dancers.

In a courtyard, the women and girls are gathered, young and old. The drummer beats out a rhythm and the ladies respond in unison. Their knees bent outward, their splay-fingered hands semaphoring at the ends of peremptory arms, their necks making impossible lateral shifts, eyes ablaze, they advance across cool stone like a syncopated army. (It is still early, and the courtyard is in shadow; the sun has not yet lent the stone its fire.) At the dancers' head, tallest of them all, fiercely erect, showing them how, is Mr. Maharaj's sister, over sixty years old, but still the greatest dancer in the state. Miss Maharaj has seen the newcomer, but makes no acknowledgment. She is the mistress of the dance. Movement is all.

When it's finished, they face each other, Mr. Maharaj's women: the sister, the American.

What are you doing?

A dance against the firebird. A propitiatory dance, to ward it off.

The firebird. (She thinks of Stravinsky, of Lincoln Center.)

Miss Maharaj inclines her head. The bird which never sings, she says. Whose nest is secret; whose malevolent wings brush women's bodies, and we burn.

But surely there is no such bird. It's just an old wives' tale.

Here there are no old wives' tales. Alas, there are no old wives.

Enter Mr. Maharaj! Turbaned, with an embroidered cloth flung about his broad shoulders, how handsome, how manly, how winsomely apologetic! She finds herself behaving petulantly, like a woman from another age. He woos and cajoles. He went to prepare her welcome. He hopes she will approve.

What is it?

Wait and see.

In the semidesert beyond his stinking palace, Mr. Maharaj has prepared an extravaganza. By moonlight, beneath hot stars, on great carpets from Isfahan and Shiraz, a gathering of dignitaries and nobles welcomes her, the finest musicians play their mournful, haunting flutes, their ecstatic strings, and sing the most ancient and freshest love songs ever heard; the most succulent delicacies of the region are offered for her delight. She is already famous in the neighborhood, a great celebrity. I invited your husband to visit us, the governor of an adjacent state guffaws, but I told him, if you don't bring your beautiful lady, don't bother to show up. A neighboring ex-prince offers to show her the art treasures locked in his palace vaults. I take them out for nobody, he says, except Mrs. Onassis, of course. For you, I will spread them in my garden, as I did for Jackie O.

While the moonlight lasts, there are camel races and horse races, dancing and song. Fireworks burst over their heads. She leans against Mr. Maharaj, his absence long forgiven, and whispers, you have made a magic kingdom for me, or (she teases him) is this how you relax every night?

She feels him stiffen, smells the bitterness leaking from his words. It is you who have made this happen, he replies. In this ruined place you have conjured this illusion. The camels, the horses, even the food has been brought from far away. We impoverish ourselves to make you happy. How can you imagine that we are able to live like this? We protect the last fragments of what we had, and now, to please you, we plunge deeper into debt. We dream only of survival; this Arabian night is an American dream.

I asked for nothing, she said. This conspicuous consumption is not my fault. Your accusation, your diatribe, is offensive.

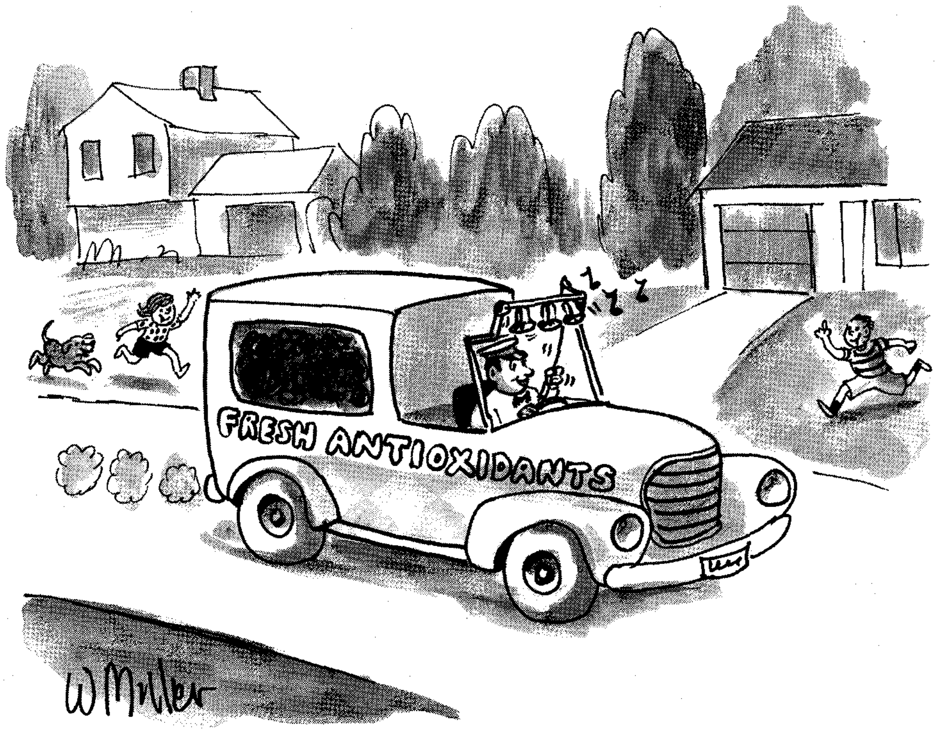
He has had too much to drink, and it has made him truthful. It is our obeisance, he tells us, at the feet of power. Rainmaker, bring us rain.

Money, you mean.

What else? Is there anything else?

I thought there was love, she says.

The full moon has never looked more beautiful. No music has ever sounded lovelier. No night has ever felt so cruel. She says, I have something to tell you.



SHE is pregnant. She dreams of burning bridges, of burning boats. She dreams of a movie she has always loved, in which a man returns to his ancestral village and somehow slips through time, to the time of his father's youth. When he tries to flee the village, and returns to the railway station, the tracks have disappeared. There is no way home. This is where the film ends.

When she awakes from her dream, in her sweltering room, the sheets are soaked and there is a woman sitting at her bedside. She gathers a wet sheet around her nakedness. Miss Maharaj smiles, shrugs. You have a strong body, she says. Younger, but in other ways not so unlike mine.

I would have left him. Now I just don't know.

Miss Maharaj shakes her head. In the village they say it will be a boy, she explains, and then the drought will break. Just superstition. But he can't let you leave. And afterward, if you go, he'll keep the child.

We'll see about that! she blasts. When she is agitated her tones become nasal, unattractive even to herself. In her mind's eye the story is closing around her, the story in which she is trapped, and in which she must, if she can, find the path of action: preferably of right action, but if not, then of wrong. What cannot be tolerated is inertia. She will not fall into some tame and heat-dazed swoon. Romance has led her into errors enough. Now she will use her head.

Slowly, as the weeks unfold, she begins to see. He does not own the casino in his palace in the city, has signed a foolish contract, letting it to a consortium of alarming men. The rent they pay him is absurd, and it is stipulated in the small print that on certain high days each year he must hang around the gaming tables, grinning ingratiatingly at the guests, lending a tone. The satellite-dish franchises are more lucrative, but this greedy old wreck of a country residence needs to eat off far richer platters if it's to be properly fed.

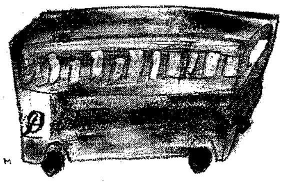
This rural palace is ageless: perhaps six hundred years. Most of it lacks electricity, windows, furniture. Cold in the cold season, hot in the heat, and if the rains should come, many of its staterooms would flood. All they have here is water, their inexhaustible palace spring. At the back of the palace, past the ruined zones where the bats hold sway, she picks her way through accumulated guano and sees a line form before dawn. The villagers, rendered indigent by the drought, come under cover of darkness, hiding their humiliation, filling their supplicant pitchers. Behind the line of the thirsty there stands, like a haunting, the high black shadow of a crenellated wall. A village woman with a few unaccountable words of English explains that this charred fortress was, in former days, the larger part of the prince's residence. Great treasures were lost when it burned; also, lives.

When did this happen?

In before time.

She begins to understand his bitterness. Another princess, Miss Maharaj tells her, a dowager even more destitute than we, recently ended her life by drinking fire. She crushed her heirloom diamonds in a cup and gulped them down.

So Mr. Maharaj, visiting America, had turned himself into an illusion of sophistication and innovation, had won her with a desperate performance. He has learned to talk like a modern man but in truth is helpless in the face of the present. The drought, his unworldliness, the decision of history to turn away her face, these things are his undoing. In Greece, the athlete who won the Olympic race became a person of high rank in his home city. Mr. Maharaj, however, rots, as does his house. Her own room begins to look like luxury's acme. Glass in the windows, the slow-turning electric fan. A telephone with, sometimes, a dial tone. A socket for her laptop's power line, the intermittent possibility of forging a modem link with that other planet, her earlier life.



He has not taken her to his own room because he is ashamed of it.

Sensing the life growing inside her, she wants to forgive its father; to help him out of the past, into that flowing, metamorphic present that has been her real life. She will do what she can do. She is "America," and brings the rain.

Again and again she awakes, sweating, naked, with Miss Maharaj murmuring at her side. Yes, a fine body, it could have been a dancer's. It will burn well.

Don't touch me! (She is alarmed.)

All brides in these parts are brought from far afield. And once the men have spent their dowries, then the firebird comes.

Don't threaten me! (Perplexed.)

Do you know how many brides he has had?

Terrified, raging, bewildered, she confronts him. Is it true? Is that why your sister has never married, why she gathers under her roof, to protect them, all the spinsters of the village, young and old? That interminable dance class of lifetime virgins, too frightened to take a husband?

Is it true you burn your brides?

Ah, my mad sister has been whispering to you, he laughs. She came to your room at night, she caressed your body, she spoke of water and fire, of women's beauty and the secret, lethal nature of men. She told you about the magic bird, I suppose. The bird of death.

No, she remembers carefully. The one who first named the firebird was you.

Mr. Maharaj in a fury brings her to his sister's dance class. Seeing him, the dancers stumble, their bell-braceleted feet lose the rhythm and come jangling to a halt. Why are you here, he asks them, raging. Tell my bride why you have come. Are you refugees or students? Sir, students. Are you here because you are afraid? Oh, please, sir, we are not afraid. His inquisition is relentless, bellowing, and all the while his eyes never leave his sister's. Miss Maharaj stands tall and silent.

The last question is for her. How many brides have I had? How many do you say? They are locked in each other's power, brother and sister, each other's eternal prisoner, outside history, beyond time. Miss Maharaj is the first to drop her eyes. She is the first, she says.

It's over. He turns to face his bride, and spreads his arms. You heard it with your own ears. Let's have no more of fables.

The heat is maddening. Skeletal bullocks die on the brown lawn. Some days, there are mustard-yellow clouds filling the sky, hanging over the evaporating marshes to the west. Even this hideous yellow rain would be welcome, but it does not fall.

Everyone has bad breath. All exhale serpents, dead cats, insects, fogs. Everyone's perspiration is thick, and stinks.

In spite of all her resolutions, the heat hypnotizes her. The child grows. Miss Maharaj's dancers become careless about closing doors and windows. They are to be glimpsed, here and there, painting one another's bodies in hot colors and wild designs, making love, sleeping with limbs entwined.

Mr. Maharaj does not come to her, will not, while she is "carrying." But each night Miss Maharaj comes. Since her brother's descent upon her dance class, Miss Maharaj has barely spoken. At night she asks only to sit at the bedside, sometimes, almost primly, to touch. This, Mr. Maharaj's American bride allows.

Her health fails. She begins to sweat, to shiver from a fever. Her shit is like thin mud. Only the palace spring saves her from dehydration and swift death. Miss Maharaj nurses her, brings her salt. The only physician hereabouts is an old fellow, out of touch, useless. Both women know the baby is at risk.

During these long, sick nights, quietly, absently, the sexagenarian dancer talks.

Something frightful has happened here. Some irreversible transformation. Without our noticing its beginnings, so that we did not resist until it was too late, until the new way of things was fixed, there has occurred a terrible, terminal rupture between our men and women. When men say they fear the absence of rain, when women say we fear the presence of fire, this is what we mean. Something has been unleashed in us. It's too late to tame it now.

Once upon a time there was a great prince here. The last prince, one could say. Everything about him was gigantic, mythological. The most handsome prince in the world, he married the most beautiful bride, a legendary dancer and temptress, and they had two children, a girl and a boy. As he aged, his strength ebbed, his eye dimmed, but she, the dancer, refused to fade. At the age of fifty she had the look of a young woman of twenty-one. As the prince's force faded, as that glamour which had been the heart of his power ceased to work its magic, so his jealousy increased. . . .

(Miss Maharaj shrugged, moved quickly to the story's end.)

The fortress burned. They both died. He had suspected his wife of taking lovers, but there had been none. The children, who had been left in the care of servants, lived. The daughter became a dancer and the son a sportsman, and so on. And the villagers said that the old prince, consumed by rage, had been transformed into a giant bird, a bird composed entirely of flames, and that was the bird that burned the princess, and returns, these days, to turn other women to ashes at their husbands' cruel command.

And you, asks the ill woman on the bed. What do you say?

Do not condescend to us in your heart, Miss Maharaj replies. Do not mistake the abnormal for the untrue. We are caught in metaphors. They transfigure us and reveal the meaning of our lives.

The illness recedes and the baby seems also to be well. The return of health is like a curtain being lifted. She is thinking like herself again. She will keep the child, but will no longer be trapped in this place of fantasies with a man she finds she does not know. She will go to the city, fly back to America, and after the child is born, what will be, will be. She has no desire to prevent the father from seeing his child. Extremely free access, including trips East, will be granted. She wants that, wants the child to know both cultures. Enough! Time to behave like an adult. She may even continue to advise Mr. Maharaj on his financial needs. Why not? It's her job. She tells Miss Maharaj her decision, and the old dancer winces, as if from a blow.

In the dead of night, the American is awakened by a hubbub in the palace, in its corridors and courtyard. She dresses, goes outside. A scratch armada of motor vehicles has assembled: a rusty bus, several motor scooters, a newish Japanese people carrier, an open truck, a Jeep in camouflage. Miss Maharaj's women are piling into the vehicles, angry, singing. They have taken weapons, the domestic weapons that came to hand, sticks, garden implements, kitchen knives. At their head, revving the Jeep, shouting impatiently at her troops, is Miss Maharaj.

What's going on?

None of your business. You don't believe in fairies. You're going home.

I'm coming with you.

Miss Maharaj treats the Jeep roughly, driving it at speed over broken ground, without lights. The motley convoy jolts along behind. They drive by the light of a molten full moon.

Ahead of them stands a ruined stone arch, an entrance to nothing, beside a fallen tree. The armada halts, turns on its lights. The dance class pours through the archway, as if it were the only possible entrance to the open waste ground beyond, as if it were the portal to another world. When she, the American, does likewise, she has that feeling again: of passing through an invisible membrane, a looking glass, into another kind of truth; into fiction.

A tableau, illuminated by the lights of motor vehicles. Remember the old bridegroom, on his way to meet his young, imported bride? Here he is again, guilty, murderous, and his young wife, uncomprehending, at his side.

In the background, silhouetted, are the figures of male villagers.

Facing the unhappy couple is Mr. Maharaj.

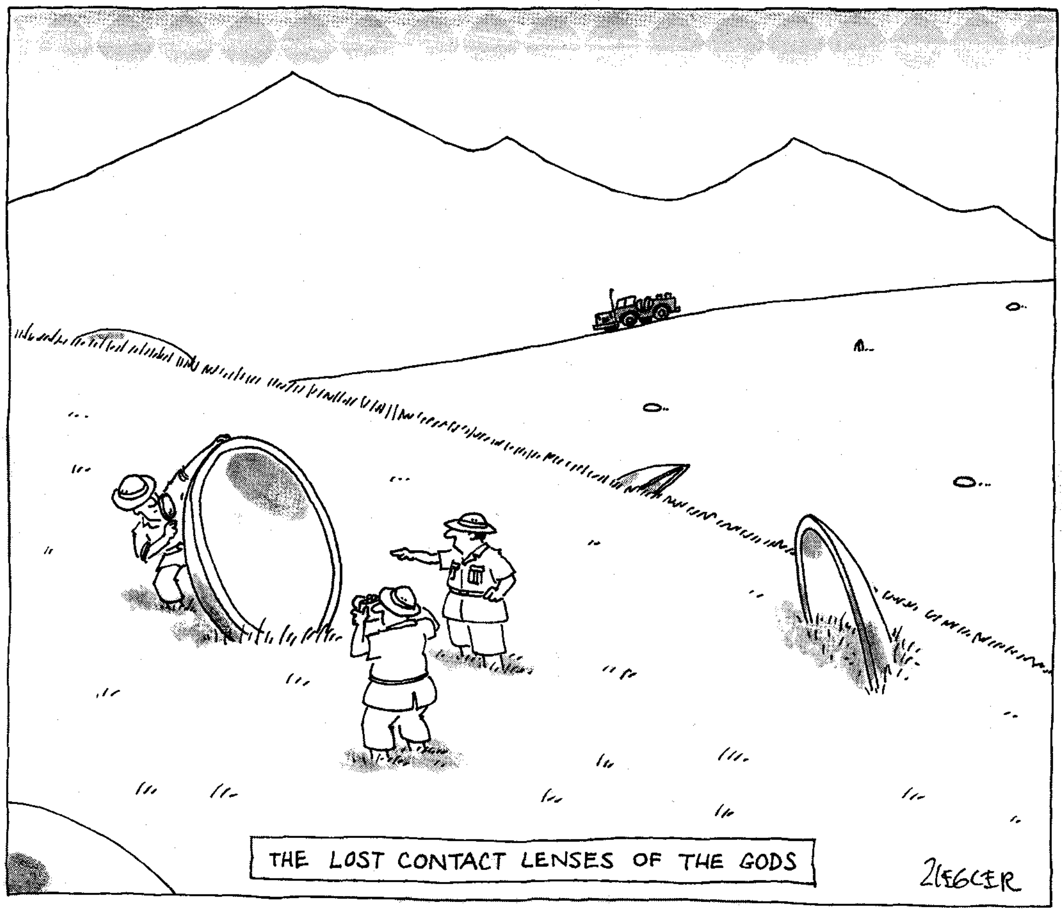
The women burst shrieking upon the charmless scene, then come raggedly to a halt, intimidated by Mr. Maharaj's presence. The sister faces the brother. Somebody has left their lights flashing. The siblings' faces glow white, yellow, red in the headlights. They speak in a language the American cannot understand; it is an opera without supertitles; she must infer what they are saying from their actions, from their thoughts made deeds, and so, as clearly as if she comprehended every syllable, she hears Miss Maharaj command her brother, what started between our parents stops now, and his response, a response that has no meaning in the world beyond the ruined archway, which he speaks as his body turns to fire, as the wings burst out of him, as his eyes blaze; his words hang in the air as the firebird's breath scorches Miss Maharaj, burns her to a cinder, and then turns upon the dotard's shrieking bride.

I am the firebird's nest.

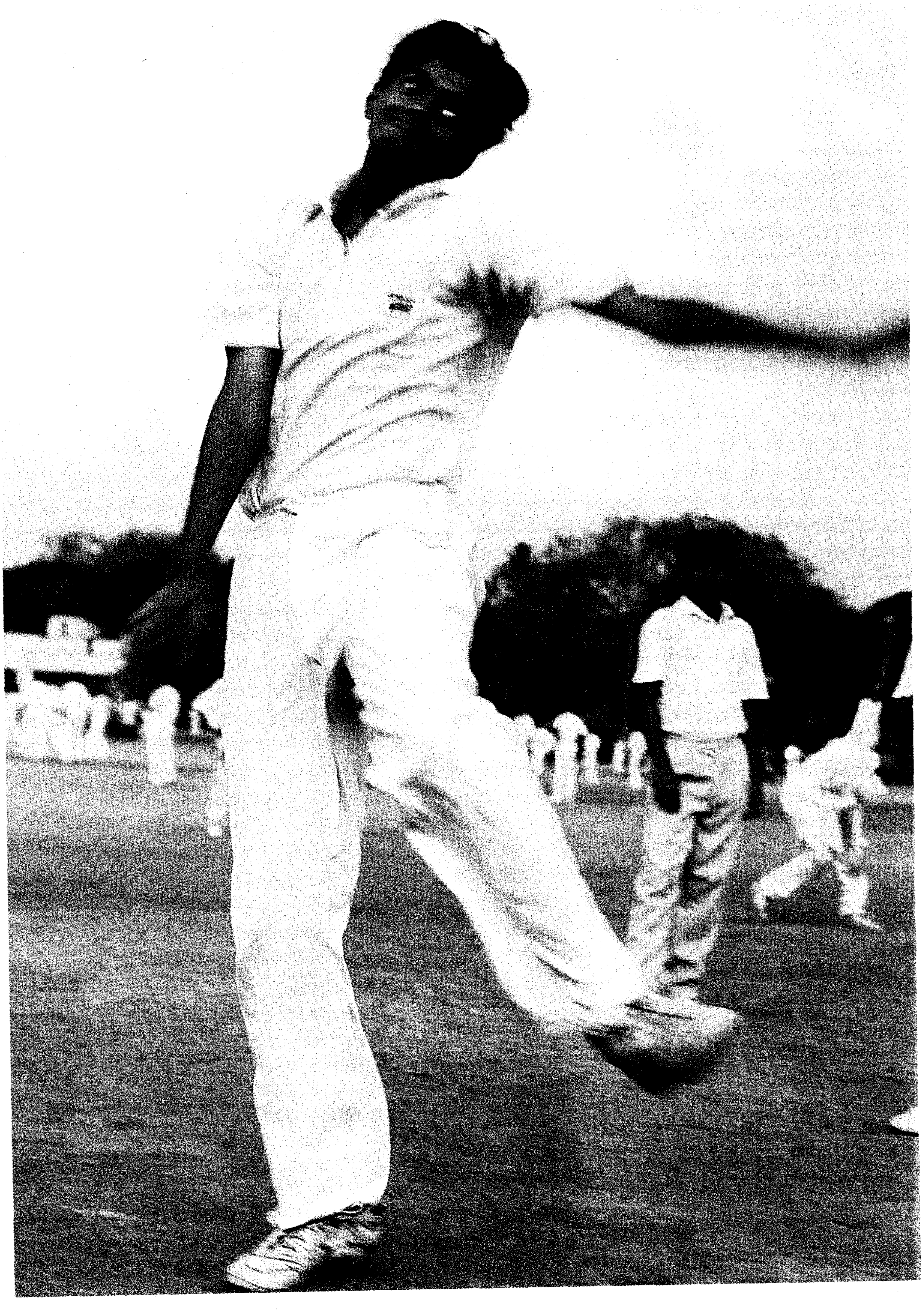
Something loosens within her as she sees Miss Maharaj burn, some shackle is broken, some limit of possibility passed. Unleashed, she crashes upon Mr. Maharaj like a wave, and the angry dancers pour behind her, seething, irresistible, she feels the frontiers of her body burst and the waters pour out, the immense crushing weight of her rain, drowning the firebird and its nest, flowing over the drought-hardened land that no longer knows how to absorb it, carrying away the old dotard and his murderous fellows, cleansing the region of its horrors, its archaic tragedies; of life.

The death toll is still rising in the former principality of ——— after last night's unexpected, drought-breaking downpour that caused widespread flooding in the area. It is feared that the former prince, Mr. A. Maharaj, and his sister, a celebrated classical dancer, are among the dead. However, an American woman, Mr. Maharaj's fiancée, is confirmed as being among the survivors.

Now she is flying home, and the ocean is below her. The universe has resumed its familiar shape. But her own shape has changed. Mr. Maharaj's child will be born in America. She caresses her swelling womb. Increasing, she is both fire and rain. ♦



THE LOST CONTACT LENSES OF THE GODS



SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

TAMASHA

IN the fifty years since the end of the Empire, Indian players have brought to the game of cricket a style and a technique that make their version of it exotic to English eyes. And Indian spectators have converted this very polite, mannered Victorian game into an Indian *tamasha.*

Tamasha is a rich Indian word conveying fun, glamour, suspense, excitement, and spectacle all in one. In India, anything can be a *tamasha:* a policeman chasing a hawker down a side street, a film star attending a public function. But cricket has become modern India's greatest *tamasha.*

The *tamasha* of cricket was evident in December of 1933, when India, for the first time on its home ground, played England in a Test (an official international match, lasting several days). The setting was the Bombay Gymkhana (pictured here on a recent morning), which, like all Raj clubs of that era, allowed Indians on the premises only as servants. (The Indian cricketers did become honorary members during the Test, but special stands were erected outside the clubhouse for the Indian crowds.) When Lala Amarnath became the first Indian to score a century (a hundred runs) in a Test, celebrating Indians rushed out of the stands and onto the field of play, and the British band, in a panicky assertion of nationalistic control, struck up "God Save the King." As the batsman left the field, Indian women surrounded him, tore off their jewelry, and pressed it on him.

India ultimately lost that match, and the Bombay Gymkhana was never again host to a Test. Today, the club is a relic of the Raj, serving roast beef and Yorkshire pudding to its predominantly Indian membership. (So many Indians want to join that it has had to close its rolls.) Indian cricket has moved on to stadiums, some fitted with floodlights and accommodating a hundred thousand spectators. Last month, for the first time in the Test's hundred-and-twenty-year history, India saw genuine night matches, finishing at one in the morning, with the government arranging for special public transport. The *tamasha* of cricket has never been more apparent. —MIHIR BOSE

FICTION

ETERNAL DON

Has Inspector Sartaj Singh—the silky Sikh and Mumbai's finest—met his match at last?

BY VIKRAM CHANDRA

"YOU'RE never going to get in here," the voice of Gaitonde said over the speaker after they had been working on the door for three hours. They had tried a cold chisel on the lock first, but what had looked like brown wood from a few feet away was in fact some kind of painted metal, and although it turned white under the blade and rang like a sharp temple bell, the door didn't give. Then they had moved to the lintels with tools borrowed from a road crew, but even when the road men took over, wielding the sledgehammers with long, expert swings and huffing breaths, the concrete bounced their blows off blithely, and the Sony speaker next to the door laughed at them. "You're behind the times," Gaitonde crackled.

"If I'm not getting in, you're not getting out," Sartaj said.

"What? I can't hear you."

Sartaj stepped up to the door. The building was a precise cube, white with green windows, on a square plot of land in Kailashpada, which was on the still-developing northern edge of Zone 13. Here, among the heavy machinery groping at swamp, edging Bombay out farther and wider, Inspector Sartaj Singh had come to arrest the great Ganesh Gaitonde, gangster, don among dons, and wily and eternal survivor.

"How long are you going to stay in there, Gaitonde?" Sartaj said, craning his neck up. The deep, round video eye of the camera above the door swivelled from side to side and then settled on him.

"You're that fucking Sardar inspector," Gaitonde said.

"That I am," Sartaj said. There were two Sikh commissioners on the force, but he was the only Sikh inspector in the whole city, and so was used to being identified by his turban and beard. He was known also for the cut of his pants, which he had tailored at a very film-starry boutique in Bandra, and also for his profile, which had once been featured by *Modern Woman* magazine in "The City's Best-Looking Bachelors." His assistant, Katekar, on the other hand, had a large paunch that sat on top of his belt like a suitcase, and a perfectly square face and very thick hands. Katekar was a senior constable, and an old colleague, and now he came around the corner of the building and stood wide-legged, with his hands in his pockets. He shook his head.

"Where are you going, Sardarji?" Gaitonde said.

"Just some things I have to take care of," Sartaj said. He and Katekar walked to the corner together, and now Sartaj could see the ladder they had going up to the ventilator.

"That's not a ventilator," Katekar said. "It only looks like one. There's just concrete behind it. What the hell is this place, sir?"

"I don't know," Sartaj said. It was somehow deeply satisfying that even Katekar, Mumbai native and practitioner of a very superior Bhuleshwar-bred cynicism, was startled by an impregnable white cube suddenly grown in Kailashpada, with a black swivel-mounted Sony video camera above the door. "I don't know. And he sounds very strange, you know. Isn't he supposed to be very polite?"

"Yes, like a congressman who wants a vote from you," Katekar said. "Polite like an oil massage, even with constables."

"I've never met him. You?"

"No, but that's what everyone says. Never heard of him being rude to police."

"Today he must not want anything," Sartaj said.

"But what's he doing here, in Kailashpada of all places?"

Sartaj nodded. The Gaitonde they had read about in police reports and in the newspapers lolled in the stands during Sharjah cricket matches with bejewelled starlets, he bankrolled politicians and bought them and sold them, his daily skim from Bombay's various dark *dhandas* was said to be greater than annual corporate incomes, and his name was used to frighten the recalcitrant. Gaitonde Bhai said so, you said, and the stubborn saw reason, and all roads were smoothed, and there was peace. But he had been on the run for many months, on the Indonesian coast in a yacht, it was rumored, far but only a phone call away. Which meant that he might as well have been next door, or as it turned out, amazingly enough, in dusty Kailashpada. The tipoff had come from an anonymous male voice on Sartaj's direct line at the station, bringing them to Kailashpada in a hasty caravan bristling with rifles. "I don't know," Sartaj said. "But now that he's here, he's ours."

"He's a prize, yes, sir," Katekar said. He had that densely snobbish look he always assumed when he thought Sartaj was being naïve. "But you're sure you want to make him yours?"

"He's already mine, only he doesn't know it," Sartaj said, turning to walk back toward the door. "All right. Cut off his power."

"Hey, Sardarji," Gaitonde boomed over the speaker. "You were the one who *lurkaoed* Mahinder Mathu's wicket." There was a strange rolling richness about his voice, even over the tinny speaker.

"I did," Sartaj said. "Friend of yours?"

"Not exactly," Gaitonde said. "But why the hell did you have to shoot him five times? In the face?"

"He was trying to bowl me out also, Gaitonde. And it was four times, and only twice in the head."

"Mathu should have gotten you. But he thought too long," Gaitonde said. "Mahinder Mathu always—" And his voice stopped short, as if cut by a knife.

Sartaj turned from the door. Now it was a matter of waiting, and an hour or two under a hot June sun would turn the unventilated, unpowered building into a furnace that even Gaitonde, who was a graduate of Arthur Road Jail many times and many years over, would find as hard to bear as the corridors of Hell. And Gaitonde had been lately very successful and thus a little softened, so perhaps it would be closer to an hour. But Sartaj had taken only two steps when he felt a deep hum rising through his toes and into his knees, and Gaitonde was back.

"What, you thought it would be so easy?" Gaitonde said, chortling. "Just a power cut? What, you think I'm a fool?"

So there was a generator somewhere in the cube. Gaitonde had been the first man in Arthur Road Jail, perhaps the first man in Bombay, to own a cellular phone. With it, safe in his cell, he had run the essential trades of drugs, *matka*, prostitution, and construction. "No, I don't think you're a fool," Sartaj said. "This, this building is very impressive. Who designed it for you?"

"Never mind who designed it, Sardarji. The question is, how are you going to get in?"

"Why don't you just come out? It'll save us all a lot of time. It's really hot out here, and I'm getting a headache."

There was a silence, filled with the murmuring of the spectators who were gathering at the end of the lane.

"I can't come out."

"Why not?"

"I'm alone. I'm only me by myself."

"I thought you had friends everywhere, Gaitonde. Everyone everywhere is a friend of Gaitonde Bhai's, isn't it? In the government, in the press, even in the police force? How is it then that you are alone?"

"Do you know I get applications, Sardarji? I probably get more applications than you police fucks. Don't believe me? Here, I'll read you one. Hold on. Here's one. This one's from Wardha. Here it is."

"Gaitonde!"

" 'Respected Shri Gaitonde.' Hear that, Sardarji? 'Respected.' So then . . . 'I am a twenty-two-year-old young man living in Wardha, Maharashtra. Currently I am doing my M.Com., having passed my B.Com. exam with seventy-one-per-cent marks. I am also known in my college as the best athlete, since I am captain of the cricket team.' Then there's a lot of crap about how bold and strong he is, how everyone in town's scared of him. O.K., then he goes on, 'I am sure that I can be of use to you. I have for long followed your daring exploits in our newspapers, which print very often these stories of your great power and powerful politics, which make you the first man in Mumbai. Many times when my friends get together, we talk about your famous adventures. Like how you finished Dhanraj Kalia's game, in spite of his police guards. And of course I hope you are not offended if I mention your great love affair with our own Miss India, Miss Nandita Kumar. Please, Shri Gaitonde, I respectfully submit to you my vita, and some small clippings about me. I will do whatever work you ask. I am very poor, Shri Gaitonde. I fully believe that you will give me a chance to make a life. Yours faithfully, Amit Shivraj Patil.'

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE, PLATE 34, "RAGA & PARADISO" (1992), COURTESY GAGOSIAN GALLERY.

"Hear that, Sardarji?" Gaitonde called out.

"Yes, Gaitonde," Sartaj said. "I do. He sounds like a fine recruit."

"He sounds like a prick, Sardarji," Gaitonde said. "I wouldn't hire him as a bhangi to clean my toilets. But he'd probably do well as a policeman."

"I'm getting tired of this, Gaitonde."

Gaitonde laughed. "Are your feelings hurt, *saab*? Should I be more respectful? Should I tell you about the wonderful and astonishing feats of the police, our defenders who give their lives in service without a thought for their own profit?"

"Gaitonde?"

"What?"

"I'll be back. I need a cold drink."

Gaitonde laughed long and very hard, and became avuncular, affectionate. "Yes, yes, of course you do. Hot out there."

"For you also? A Thums Up?"

"I've a fridge in here, *chikniya*. Just because you're so fair and so herolike good-looking doesn't mean you're extra smart. You get your drink."

"I will. I'll be back."

"What else would you do, Sardarji? Go, go."

Sartaj walked down the street, and Katekar fell in beside him. The cracked black tarmac seemed to swim and shimmer in the heat. The street had emptied, the spectators bored by the lack of explosions and bullets and hungry for lunch. Between Bhagwan Tailors and Trimurti Music, they found the straightforwardly named Best Café, which had tables scattered under a neem tree and rattling black floor fans. Sartaj pulled desperately at a Coke, and Katekar sipped at fresh lime and soda, only slightly sweet. He was trying to lose weight. From where they sat they could see Gaitonde's white bunker.

"Let's blow it up," Katekar said.

"With what?" Sartaj said. "And that'll kill him for sure."

Katekar grinned. "Yes, sir. So what, sir?"

"And what would the intelligence boys say?"

"Sahib, excuse me, but the intelligence boys can suck my *lauda*. Why didn't they know he was building this thing?"

"Now, that would have been very, very intelligent, wouldn't it?" Sartaj said. He leaned back in his chair and stretched. "You think we can find a bulldozer?"

SARTAJ had a metal chair brought to the front of the bunker, and he sat on it patting his face with a cold, wet towel. He was sleepy. The video camera was unmoving and silent.

"Ay, Gaitonde!" Sartaj said. "You there?"

The camera made its very small buzzing machine noise, nosed about blindly, and then found Sartaj. "Yes, I'm here. I was searching this bastard place. Sardarji, can you believe it? There's nothing to eat in here."

"Nothing?"

"A brand-new two-lakh fridge big enough to walk into, and not a slice of bread in it. I have idiots working for me."

Sartaj thought suddenly that Gaitonde had learned that big voice from the movies, from Prithviraj Kapoor in a smoking jacket complaining about the servants. "Can we send you something?" Sartaj said. "Shrimp? Chicken?"

"No, you can't, and stop trying to be motherfucking smart."

"You'll stay hungry?" Sartaj was trying to calculate the chances of starving Gaitonde out. But he remembered that Gandhiji had lasted for weeks on water and juice. The bulldozer would arrive in an hour—an hour and a half, at most.

"I've been hungry before," Gaitonde said. "More hungry than you could imagine."

"Listen, it's too bloody hot out here," Sartaj said. "Come out and back at the station you can tell me all about how hungry you were."

"I can't come out."

"I'll take care of you, Gaitonde. There are all sorts of people trying to kill you, I know. But no danger, I promise. This is not going to turn into an encounter. You come out now and we'll be back at the station in six minutes. You'll be absolutely safe. From there you can call your friends. Safe, *ekdum* safe. You have my promise."

But Gaitonde wasn't interested in promises. "Back when I was a kid, I left the country for the first time. It was on a boat, you know. Those days that was the business: get on a boat, go to Dubai, go to Bahrain, come back with gold biscuits. I was excited, because I had never left the country before. Not even to Nepal, you understand. O.K., Sardarji, establishing shot: there was the small boat, five of us on it, sea, sun, all that kind of crap. Salim Kaka was the leader, a six-foot Pathan with a long beard, good man with a sword. Then there was Mathu, narrow and thin everywhere, always picking his nose, supposed to be a tough guy. Me, nineteen and didn't know a damn thing. And there was Gaston, the owner of the boat, and Pascal, his assistant, two small dark guys from somewhere in the South. It was Salim Kaka's deal, his contacts there, and his money that hired the boat, and his experience, when to go out, when to come back, everything was his. Mathu and I were his boys, behind him all the time. Got it?"

Katekar rolled his eyes. Sartaj said, "Yes, Salim Kaka was the leader, you and Mathu the thin guy were the guns, and Gaston and Pascal sailed the boat. Got it."

Katekar propped himself against the wall next to the door and spilled paan masala into his palm. The speaker gleamed a hard metallic silver. Sartaj shut his eyes.

Gaitonde went on. "I had never seen such a huge sky before. Purple and gold and purple. Mathu was combing his hair again and again into a Dev Anand puff. Salim Kaka sat on the deck with us. He had huge feet, square and blunt, each cracked like a piece of wood, and a beard that was smooth and red like a flame. That night he told us about his first job, robbing an *angadia* couriering cash to Bombay from Surat. They caught the *angadia* as he got off the bus, tossed him in the back of an Ambassador, and went roaring away to an empty chemical godown in the industrial estates at Vikhroli. In the godown they stripped him of his shirt, his banian, his pants, everything, and found sewn inside the pants, over the thighs, four lakhs in five-hundred-rupee notes. Also a money belt with sixteen thousand in it. He was standing there baby-naked, his big paunch shaking, holding his hands over his shrunken *lauda*, as they left. Clear?"

Sartaj opened his eyes. "A courier, they got him, they made some money. So what?"

"So the story's not over yet, smart Sardarji. Salim Kaka was closing the door, but then he turned around and came back.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SWEET THING

I live where
the world's most excellent fruits
and most respectable people are and
where the most beautiful birds build their nests.

Vulgar people live here, too,
in filthy ditches brilliant waterlilies bloom.
The smell of children's pee-soaked blankets
surrounds the place,
and I live here, too, as excess.

I am the citizen of an extremely overpopulated country:
everything in it drowns at times
in the flood tide of the new moon.
Sometimes the swan's neck emerges from the lava stream
glistening in the sun.
The dream pitcher doesn't wait here for the touch
but simply floats away—
With such countless disgraces, unbearable wounds and pain,
under the merciless gaze of the developed world
I live on in this country like this.

Because the world's most amazing fruits
have grown here,
the most respectable people,
the most beautiful birds,
I survive through the year, through rain and shine—
I survive with the indomitable longing
for the harvest's golden grains
in this place, like this.

—SHAMIM AZAD

(*Translated, from the Bengali, by Carolyne Wright, Syed Manzoorul Islam, and the author.*)

He caught the guy by the throat, lifted him up and around, and put a knee between his legs. 'Come on, Salim Pathan,' someone yelled to him, 'this is no time to want to fuck a boy.' And Salim Kaka, who was groping the *angadia's* bum, said, 'Sometimes if you squeeze a beautiful ass, as you would a peach, it reveals all the secrets of the world,' and he held up a little brown silk packet, which the *angadia* had taped behind his balls. In it were a good gross of the highest-quality diamonds, agleam and aglitter, which they fenced the next week at fifty per cent, and Salim Kaka's cut alone was one lakh, and this was in the days when a lakh meant something. 'But,' Salim Kaka said, 'the lakh was the least of it, money is only money.' But after that he was known as a lustrous talent, a sharp lad. 'I'll squeeze you like a peach,' he'd say, cocking a craggy eyebrow, and the poor unfortunate at the receiving end would spill cash, cocaine, secrets, anything.

" 'How did you know with the *angadia*, Salim Kaka?' I asked, and Salim Kaka said, 'It is very simple. I looked at him from the door and he was still afraid. When I had my knife at his throat he had said to me in a child's little voice, "Please don't kill me, my *baap*." I hadn't killed him, he was still alive and holding his *lauda*, the money was gone, but it wasn't his, we were leaving, so why was he still afraid? A man who is afraid is a man who still has something to lose.' "

"Very impressive," Sartaj said. He shifted in his chair, and regretted it immediately as his shoulder blade found a curve of heated metal. He adjusted his turban and tried to breathe slowly, evenly. Katekar was fanning himself with a folded afternoon newspaper, his eyes abstracted and his forehead slack, while into the slow stirring of the air came Gaitonde's voice with its cool electronic hiss.

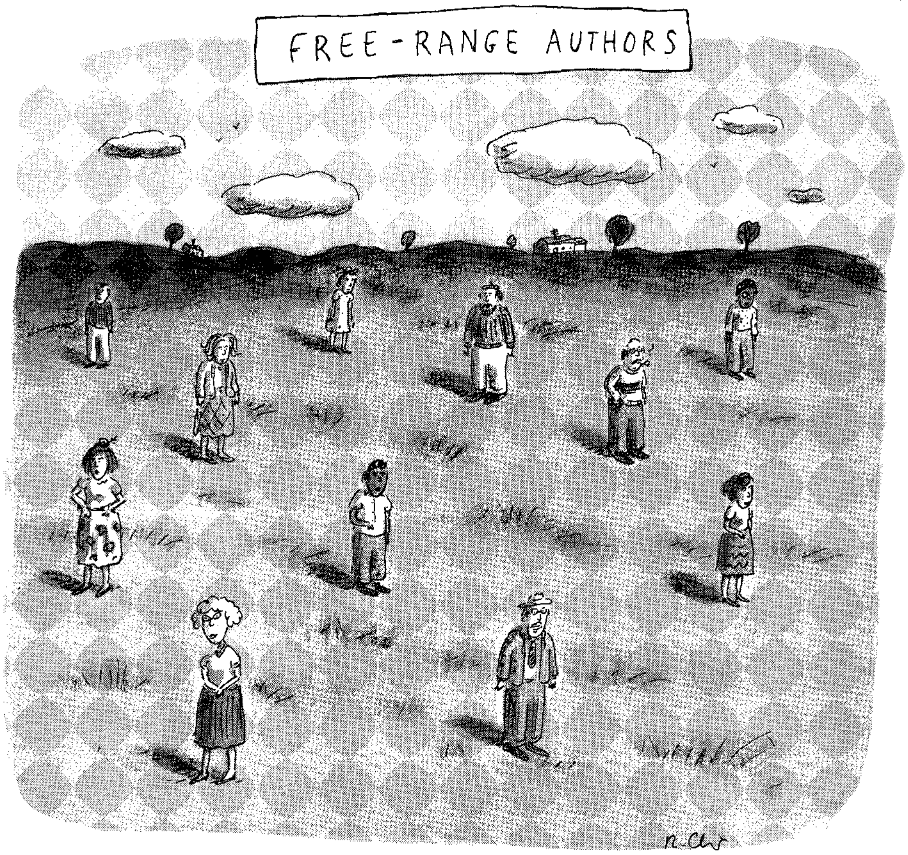
"I resolved to be sharply watchful forever after, for I was ambitious. That night I laid my body down along the bow, as close as I could get to the onrushing water, and I dreamed. Did I tell you I was nineteen? I was nineteen and I made myself stories about cars and a high house and myself entering a party and flashbulbs popping.

"Mathu came and sat beside me. He lit a cigarette for himself and gave me one. I drew hard on it like him. In the dark I could see the puff of his hair, his haggard shoulders, and I tried to remember his features, which were too bony to be anywhere close to Dev Anand's, but still every day he stroked talcum powder onto that pointy rat face and tried. I felt suddenly kindly toward him. 'Isn't this beautiful?' I said. He laughed. 'Beautiful? We could drown,' he said, 'and nobody would know what happened to us. We would disappear, *phat*, gone.' His cigarette made spirals in the dark. 'What do you mean?' I asked. 'Oh, you pitiful *dehati* idiot,' he said. 'Don't you know? Nobody knows we are out here.' 'But,' I said, 'Salim Kaka's people know, his boss knows.' I could feel him laughing at me, his knee jogging against my shoulder. 'No, they don't.' He was leaning closer to me, whispering, and I could smell his banian and see the pale phosphorescence of his eyes. 'Nobody knows, he didn't tell his boss. Don't you get it? This is his own deal. Why do you think we're on this little *khatara* of a boat, not a trawler? Why do you think we are with him, one *dehati* smelling of pig shit and farm dirt and a very, very junior member of the company? Eh? Why? This is Salim Kaka's own little operation. He wants to go independent, and to go independent what do you need? Capital. That's what. That's why we're out here slopping away in this fucking wheezing tin trap, one pitch away from the big fishes. He thinks he's going to make enough to start himself all new and fresh and shiny. Capital, capital, you understand?'

"I sat up then. He put a hand on my shoulder and swung himself up. '*Beta*,' he said, 'if you want to live in the city you have to think ahead three turns, and look behind a lie to see the truth and then behind that truth to see the lie. And then, and then, if you want to live well, you need a bankroll. Think about it.' Mathu patted my shoulder and drew back. I saw his face for a second in dim light as he lowered himself into the cabin. And I did think about it."

UNDER the speaker Katekar turned his head, right and left, and Sartaj heard the small clicking noise of the bones in his neck. "I remember this Salim Kaka," Katekar said softly. "I remember seeing him in Dongri, walking around in a red lungi and a silk kurta. The kurtas were of different colors, but the lungi was always red. He worked with Haji Salman's gang, and he had a woman in Dongri, I remember hearing. Dongri was Bachchu Singh's area, but still Salim Kaka came for the woman, in a red lungi and silk kurtas."

Sartaj nodded. Katekar's face was



puffy, as if he had just woken from sleep.

"Love?" Sartaj said.

Katekar grinned. "Judging by the silk, it must have been," he said. "Or maybe it was just that she was seventeen and had an ass like a prancing deer's. She was an auto mechanic's daughter, I think."

"Don't believe in love, Katekar?"

"*Saab*, I believe in silk, and in everything that is soft, and everything else that is hard, but . . ."

Above their heads the speaker rumbled. "What in God's name are you mumbling about, Sardarji?"

"Go on, go on," Sartaj said. "Just minor instructions."

"Not giving up? Good, I like that. So listen. The next afternoon, we started to see tree branches in the water, pieces of old crates, bottles bobbing down and up, tires, once the whole wooden roof of a house floating upside down. Gaston stayed on deck the whole time now, one arm around the mast, looking this way and that with binoculars, never stopping. I asked Mathu, 'Are we close?' He shrugged. Salim Kaka came up in a new kurta. He stood by the bow, looking to the north, and I saw his fingers dabbing at the silver medallion at his chest. I wanted to ask him where we were, but there was a narrow-eyed gravity on his face that kept me from speaking."

Sartaj leaned forward toward Katekar. "Do you think our friend Gaitonde really had an affair with Miss India?"

Katekar grinned. "She was a very English-medium type, that one. But it's true, she stayed at his house in Hong Kong."

"Maybe he learned English."

"Maybe she liked his sweaters. He has a lot of sweaters."

Sartaj remembered the pictures of Gaitonde, the medium-sized body and the medium face, neither ugly nor handsome, all of it instantly forgettable despite the bright-blue and red cashmere sweaters, everything quite commonplace. But now there was this voice, quiet and urgent, and Sartaj tipped his head toward the speaker.

"As night came, in the last failing light, there was a pinpoint of red winking steadily to the north. We dropped anchor, then headed toward it in a dinghy. Mathu rowed, and Salim Kaka sat opposite, watching our beacon, and I between them. I was expecting a wall, like I had seen near the Gateway of India, but instead there were high rushes that towered above our heads. Salim Kaka took a pole and pushed us through the feathered banks that creaked and whispered, and although I wasn't told to I had my pistol in my hand. Then the wood scraped under my feet, hard on ground. Flashlight in hand, Salim Kaka led us up the island, that's what it was, a soft wet rising in the swamp. We walked for a long time, half an hour maybe, Salim Kaka in front, under a rising moon. He had a brown canvas bag over his shoulder, big as a wheat sack. Then I saw the beacon again, over the top of the stalks. It was a torch tied to a pole. I could smell the tallow; the flames jumped two feet high. Under it there were three men. They were dressed like city people, and in the leaping light I could see their fair skin, their bushy black eyebrows, their big noses. Turks? Iranis? Arabs? I don't know still, but two of them had rifles, muzzles pointed just a little away from us. My trigger was cool and sweaty on my finger. I cramped and thought, You'll fire and finish us all. I took a breath, turned my wrist, feeling the butt against my thumb, and watched them. Salim Kaka and one of them spoke, their heads close together. Now the bag was offered, and a suitcase in return. I saw a gleam of yellow, and heard the clicks of locks shutting. My arm ached.

"Salim Kaka stepped backward, and we edged away from the foreigners. I felt the smooth wet rim of a stalk against my neck, and I couldn't find a way out, only the yielding pressure of vegetation, and panic. Then Salim Kaka turned abruptly and slipped between the bushes, the faint beam of his flashlight marking his way, and then Mathu. I came last, sidewise, my pistol hand held low, my neck taut. I can still see them watching, the three men. I see the gleam of the metal bands around the rifle muzzles, and their shaded eyes. We were walking fast. I felt as if we were flying, and the tall grass that had pulled and clawed at me at first now brushed softly along my sides. Salim Kaka turned his head, and I saw his frantic smile. We were happy, running.

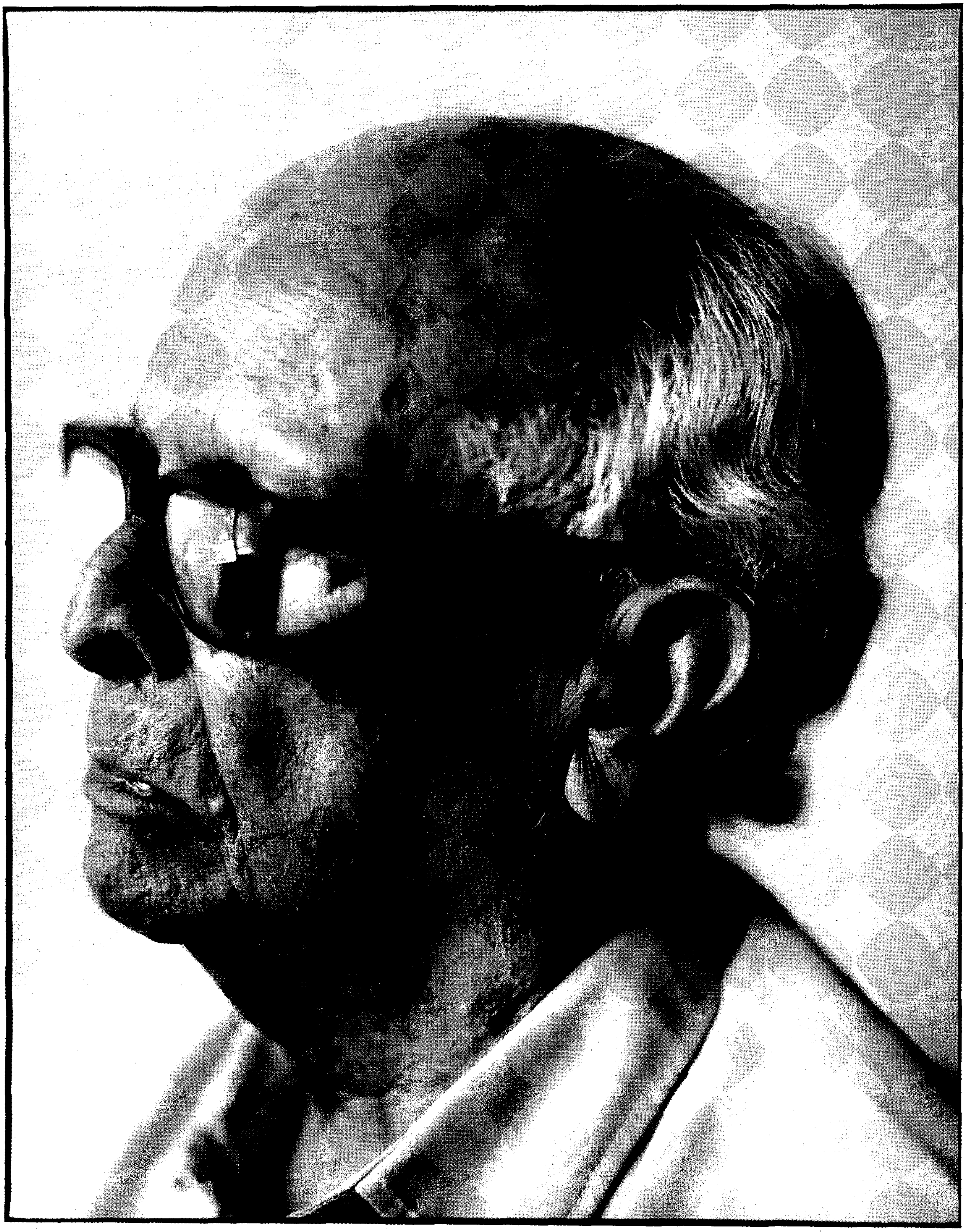
"Salim Kaka paused at the edge of a little stream where water had cut a drop of three feet, maybe four, and he reached down with his right foot and found a place for his heel. Mathu looked at me, his face cut into angles by the gaunt moonlight, and I looked at him. Before

SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

MALGUDI'S MASTER

R. K. NARAYAN, born in 1906, lives on, as if preserved in the tranquil, perennial essence of Malgudi, the fictional town where almost all his fiction takes place. The lightness of his touch, the smallness of his chosen field of observation, and the profound equanimity of his Hindu vision have been criticized as inadequate to the problem-ridden, poverty-stricken immensity of India. But who takes a continent for a subject when humanity is close at hand? An observed detail has a resonance—a branching truth—that no generalization can match. V. S. Naipaul, who as a boy in Trinidad and a young man in England had read and admired Narayan, was dismayed, on first travelling to India, to find it "cruel and overwhelming" compared to the cozy and comic world of Narayan's novels. He concluded that "his comedy and irony were not quite what they had appeared to be, were part of a Hindu response to the world." As a Hindu, Narayan believes in reincarnation—a universe of infinite rebirths—and a genial eternity keeps company with his unblinking social realism. In "The Guide" (1958), a con man becomes a saint; in "The Painter of Signs" (1976), the heroine of a doomed romance is momentarily "perhaps a goddess to be worshipped."

Western liberal prejudice demands that Indian writers confront suffering. Narayan confronts it somewhat as Fielding and O. Henry do, with the recognition that suffering is never all there is to the picture; human buoyance and hopefulness are also part of it. "India will go on," Narayan told the young Naipaul, and if this affirmation falls short of a political program it does proclaim a lifelong opportunity to observe, to invent, to express surprise at the permutations of human behavior, to smile. Travellers to India frequently remark upon its exhilarating liveliness, once culture shock has been absorbed; Narayan gives the reader that lively joy as registered by a native immunized against shock. He surveys his teeming scene partly from the perspective of this most ancient of practiced religions, and partly from that of Edwardian English fiction, which took an animated, caste-conscious, at times heartless society as self-evidently an entertainment. —JOHN UPDIKE



The long list of novels and stories that certify Narayan's revered place in Indian letters began in 1933, when Graham Greene happened upon the typescript of Narayan's first novel, "Swami and Friends," and saw to its publication. Photographed in Madras, May 24, 1997.

Salim Kaka had completed his step, I knew where we were going. The report of the pistol bounced off the water into my belly. I knew the butt had bruised the base of my thumb. Only when the flare left my eyes could I see again, and my stomach was twisting and loosening and twisting, and at the bottom of the ditch Salim Kaka's feet were treading steadily, as if he were still finding his way to the boat. The water thrashed and boiled. 'Fire, Mathu,' I said. 'Fire, damn you.' Those were the first words I had spoken since we'd come ashore. My voice was firm and strange, the sound of it alien. Mathu tilted his head and pointed his barrel. Again a flash brought the weeds out from the shadows, but still those feet clambered away, going steadily somewhere. I aimed my pistol into the round frothy turbulence, and at the first discharge all movement stopped, but I put another one in just to make sure. 'Come on,' I said, 'let's go home.' Mathu nodded, as if I were in charge, and he jumped into the ditch and scrabbled for the suitcase. The flashlight was glowing under the water, a luminous yellow bubble that embraced exactly half of Salim Kaka's head and his green kurta collar. I snapped it up as I went through, though all the way back to the dinghy the fat moon was low overhead and lit us to safety."

SARTAJ and Katekar heard Gaitonde drink now. They heard, clearly, every long gulp and the glass emptying. "Whiskey?" Sartaj whispered. "Beer?"

Katekar shook his head. "No, he doesn't drink. Doesn't smoke either. Very health-conscious don he is. Exercises every day. Water he's drinking. Bisleri with a twist of lime in it."

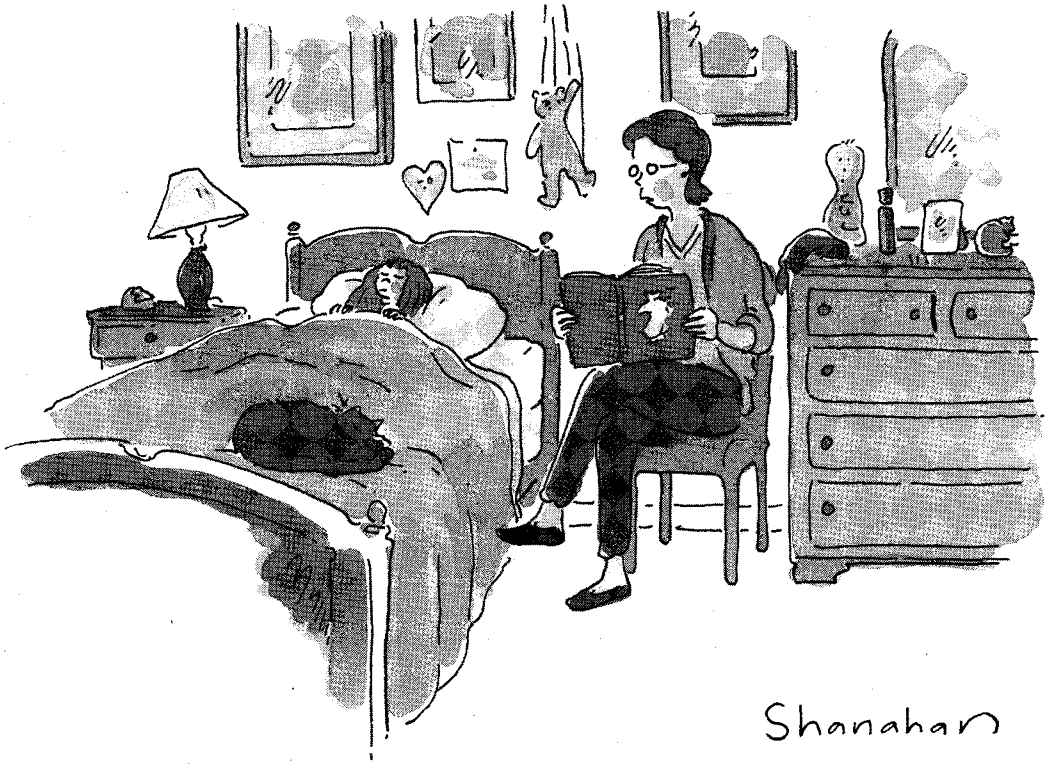
Gaitonde went on, hurrying now. "When the sun came up on the boat the next day Mathu and I were still awake. We had spent the night sitting in the cabin, across from each other, with the suitcase tucked under Mathu's bunk but still visible. I had my pistol in my lap, and I could see Mathu's under his thigh. The roof above my head creaked out a stealthy step. We had told Gaston and Pascal that we had been ambushed by the police, the police of whatever country we had been in. Pascal had wept, and they were both moving very gently now, in respect for our mourning. Behind Mathu's head there was the dark brown of the wood, and the white of his banian floating and dipping with the swell of the waves. There was the hazy distance between us, and I knew what he was thinking. So I decided. I put my pistol on the pillow, put my feet up on the bunk. 'I'm going to sleep,' I said. 'Wake me up in three hours and then you can rest.' I turned to the wood, with my back toward Mathu, and shut my eyes. Very, very low down on my back there was a single circle on my skin which twitched and crawled. It expected a bullet. I could not calm it. But I kept my breathing steady, my knuckles against my lips. There are some things you can control.

"When I woke it was evening. There was a thick orange light pushing into the cabin from the hatch, coloring the wood like fire. My tongue filled my throat and mouth, and my hand when I tried to move it had become a loathsome bloated weight. I thought the bullet had found me, or I had found the bullet, but then I jerked once and my heart was thudding painfully and I sat up. My stomach was covered with sweat. Mathu was asleep, his face down on the pillow. I tucked my pistol into my waistband and went up. Pascal smiled at me out of his black little face. The clouds were piled above us, enormous and bulging, higher and higher into the red heaven. And this boat a twig on the water. My legs shook and I sat down and prayed. I said the Hanuman *chalisa.* I said it again and again. When it was dark, I asked Pascal for two sacks. He gave me two white sacks made of canvas, with drawstrings.

" 'Wake up,' I said to Mathu when I went downstairs, and kicked his bunk. He came awake groping for his pistol, which he couldn't find until I pointed to it, between the mattress and the wall. 'Calm down, you jumpy fuck. Just calm down. We have to share.' He said, 'Don't ever do that again.' He was growling, stretching his shoulders up like a rooster heaving its feathers. I smiled at him. 'Listen,' I said, 'you fucking sleepy fuck-drop from Kumbhkaran, do you want your half or what?' He calculated for a moment, still all swollen and angry, but then he subsided with a laugh. 'Yes, yes,' he said. 'Half-half. Half-half.'

"Gold is good. It moves and slips on your fingers with a satisfying smoothness. When it is near to pure it has that healthy reddish glow that reminds you of apple cheeks. But that afternoon as we moved the bars from the suitcase into the sacks, one

"Vodka Martini, splash of vermouth, with a twist. Let the healing begin."



"And, because a princess can't be forced to testify against her prince, they lived happily ever after."

by one, one for one and then one for the other, what I liked best was the weight. The bars were small, a little longer than the breadth of my palm, much smaller than I had expected, but they felt so dense and plump I could hardly bear to put each in my sack. My face was warm and my heart congested and I knew I had done right. When we got to the last bar, which was mine, I put it in my left pants pocket, where I could feel it always, slapping against me. Then the pistol on the other side at the back of my waistband. Mathu nodded. 'Almost home,' he said. 'How much do you think it's worth?' His smile was slow and faltering. I looked down at him and felt only contempt. I knew absolutely and for certain and in one instant that he would always be a *tapori*, nothing more, maybe even with ten or twelve people working for him, but always nothing more than a nerve-racked small-time local buffoon, jacked up into tottery brutishness with a gun and a chopper under his shirt, that's all. If you think in rupees you're a sweep-carrying bhangi, nothing more. Because lakhs are dirt, and crores are shit. I thought, What is golden is the future in your pocket, the endless possibility of it. So I shoved the sack under my bunk, nudging the last of it under with my foot as Mathu watched with wide eyes. I turned my back on him and climbed up to the deck laughing to myself. I was no longer afraid. I knew him now. That night I slept like a baby."

Katekar snorted, and shook his head. "And for years he slept a restful sleep every night, while the bodies fell right and left." Sartaj held up a warning hand, and Katekar wiped the sweat from his face and muttered quietly, "They're all of them the fucking same, greedy bastards. The trouble is when one gets killed, five come up to take his place."

"Quiet," Sartaj said. "I want to hear this."

The speaker growled again. "The day after the next, I saw, over the water, a faraway hillock. 'What is that?' I asked Gaston. 'Home,' he said. From the bow Pascal called to another boat leaning out toward the horizon. '*Aaa-hoooooooo*,' he called, and the long cry and its echoing reply wrapped about my shoulders. I was home.

"We helped to beach the boat, and then took leave of Pascal and Gaston. Mathu was whispering threats at them, but I shouldered him aside, not too gently, and said, 'Listen, boys, keep this quiet, very quiet, and we'll do business again.' I gave them a gold bar each—from my share—and shook hands with them, and they grinned and were my fellows for life. Mathu and I walked a little way down the road, to the bus stop, with our white sacks dragging over our shoulders. I waved down an auto rickshaw and nodded at Mathu. I left him standing there, buffeted by exhaust. I knew he wanted to come with me, but he thought more of himself than he was, and he would've forced me to kill him, sooner or later. I had no time for him. I was going to Bombay."

The speaker was silent. Sartaj stood up, turned, and looked up and down the street. "Eh, Gaitonde?" he said.

A moment passed, and then the answer came: "Yes, Sartaj?"

"The bulldozer's here."

Indeed it was there, a black leviathan that now appeared at the very end of the street, with its throaty clanking causing a crowd to appear instantly. The machine had a certain dignity, and the driver had a cap on his head, worn with the flair of a specialist.

"Get those people out of the road," Sartaj said to Katekar. "And that thing up here. Pointed this way."

"I can hear it now," Gaitonde said. The video lens moved in its housing restlessly.

"You'll see it soon," Sartaj said. The policemen near the vans were checking their weapons. "Listen, Gaitonde, this is all a farce that I don't like one bit. We've never met, but still we've spent the afternoon talking. Let's be gentlemen. There's no need for this. Just come out and we can go back to the station and we can get you something to eat. Shrimp."

"Shrimp would be good," Gaitonde said. "But I can't do that."

"Stop it," Sartaj said. "Stop acting the *fillum* villain, you're better than that. This isn't some bloody schoolboy game."

"It never was, my friend," Gaitonde said. "It never was."

Sartaj turned away from the door. He wanted, with an excruciating desire, a cup of tea. "All right. What's your name?"

he said to the driver of the bulldozer, who was leaning against a gargantuan track.

"Bashir Ali."

"You know what to do?"

Bashir Ali twisted his blue cap in his hands.

"It's my responsibility, Bashir Ali. I'm giving you an order as a police inspector, so you don't have to worry about it. Let's get that door down."

Bashir Ali cleared his throat. "But that's Gaitonde in there, Inspector sahib," he said tentatively.

Sartaj took Bashir Ali by the elbow and walked him to the door.

"Gaitonde?"

"Yes, Sardarji?"

"This is Bashir Ali, the driver of the bulldozer. He's afraid of helping us. He's frightened of you."

"Bashir Ali," Gaitonde said. The voice was commanding, like an emperor's, sure of its consonants and its generosity.

Bashir Ali was looking at the middle of the door. Sartaj pointed up at the video camera, and Ali blinked up at it. "Yes, Gaitonde Bhai?" he said.

"Don't worry. I won't forgive you"—Bashir Ali blanched—"because there's nothing to forgive. We are both trapped, you on that side of the door and me on this. Do what they tell you to do, get it over with, and go home to your children. Nothing will happen to you. Not now and not later. I give you my word." There was a pause. "The word of Ganesh Gaitonde."

By the time Bashir Ali had climbed up to his seat on top of the bulldozer he had understood, it seemed, his role in the situation. He put his cap on his head with a twirl and pointed it backward. The engine grunted and then settled into a steady roar. Sartaj leaned close to the speaker. The left side of his head, from the nape of the neck to the temples, was caught in a sweeping pulse of heat and pain.

"Gaitonde?"

"Speak, Sardarji, I'm listening."

"Just open this damn door."

"Oho, you want me to just open this door? I know, Sardarji, I know."

"Know what?"

"I know what you want. You want me to just open this damn door. Then you want to arrest me and take me to the station. You want to be a hero in the newspapers. You want a promotion. Two promotions. Deep down you want even more. You want to be rich. You want to be an all-India hero. You want the Presi-

SKETCHBOOK BY DODO

LE CURRY

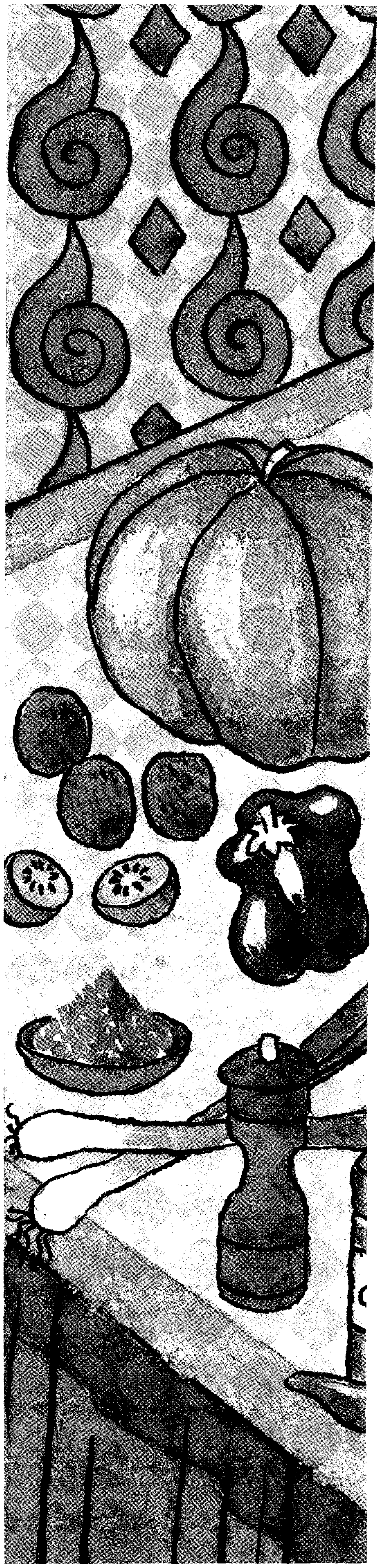
THE invisible cook here is clearly setting out to make a curry, but what, exactly, is a curry? Asking an Indian isn't much help, since the word "curry" seems to have been popularized by the English (as was the stuff in that jar); the relationship of various similar-sounding Indian terms to the word involves a fair amount of conjecture. When English-speaking Indians say "curry," they usually mean a stew flavored with a subtle, customized mixture of spices and finished with any of an assortment of thickeners, enrichers, and natural colorings. Requesting a more precise answer is like asking a table of French truckers to define a cassoulet.

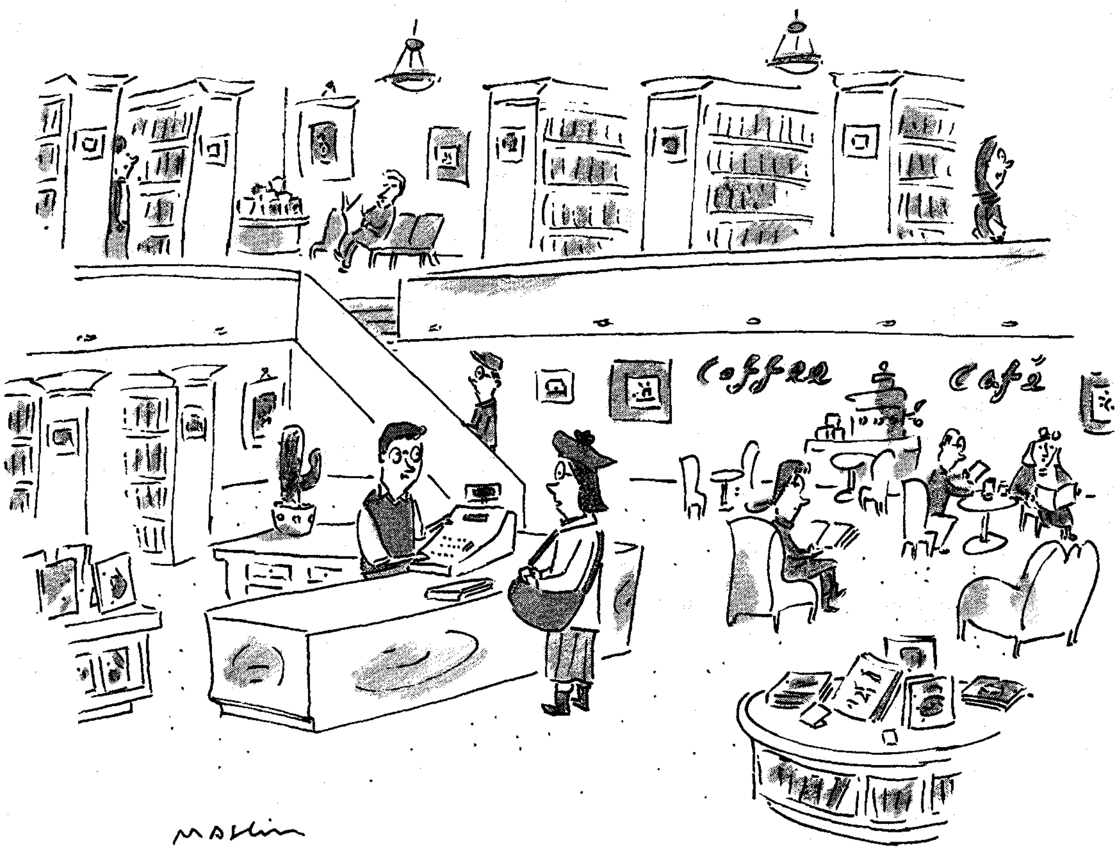
This kitchen scene, drawn by the French artist Dodo in 1990, on her return from a journey to India, actually tells us more about French notions of food than about Indian cooking. The cloth-covered table belongs in a French kitchen, with Grand-mère setting up for her *blanquette de veau,* and not in an Indian *rasoi.* Even the wallpaper, despite its motif, hints more at the concierge's loge than at the open fire and frenetic cacophony of an Indian kitchen in full swing. Obviously, the artist was having a little fun.

No proud Indian cook would forgo the careful hand-roasting and hand-grinding of spice mixtures—the cornerstones of Indian cooking—in favor of that jar of curry powder. And don't bet on the pitcher of cream: Indian cooks favor yogurt (which provides a welcome acidic tang) and coconut milk (which adds sweetness and richness). That beautiful rectangle of butter would have dripped off the edge of any table south of Darjeeling: in India, butter is slowly and ever so attentively cooked until it takes on the butterscotch aroma of a clear and golden ghee. Lemons? Indians are far more likely to use limes, vinegar, tamarind, or powdered dried mango to give zing to their curries. And they eat raw and cooked onions—never leeks.

If an Indian sketched a French kitchen, what would we see? Maybe a big jar of ghee, some coconuts, and one of those pretty jars of dried *herbes de Provence.*

—JAMES PETERSON





"A bialy, a latte, and 'A Farewell to Arms.'"

• •

dent to give you a medal on Republic Day. You want the medal in full color on television. You want to fuck film stars."

"Gaitonde—"

"But you know I've had all that. And I'll beat you."

"How? You have some of your boys in there with you?"

"No. Not one. I told you, I'm alone."

"A tunnel? A helicopter hidden inside?"

Gaitonde laughed. "No, no."

"What then? You have a battery of Bofors guns?"

"Not even an AK-47. But I'll beat you."

The bulldozer was shimmering on the black road, flanked by grim-eyed policemen. Their choices were narrowing rapidly, leading them inevitably to this metal door, and they were determined, and helpless, and afraid.

"Gaitonde," Sartaj said, rubbing his eyes. "Last chance. Come on, *yaar*. This is very, very stupid."

"I can't do it. Sorry."

"All right. Just stay back from the door when we come in. And for God's sake have your hands up."

"Don't worry," Gaitonde said. "I will."

Sartaj stood up straight, his back to the door, and checked his pistol. He rotated the cylinder, and the yellow cartridges sat fat and round in the metal. The heat came through the soles of his shoes, into his feet.

Suddenly the speaker came to life again against his shoulder blade. "Sartaj, you called me *yaar*. So I'll tell you something. Build it big or small, there is no house that is safe. Love is an iron trap, and the game always wins."

Sartaj could feel the tinny trembling in his chest from the speaker. The machine in front of him produced a blare that pressed him back against the door, and it was enough. He palmed the cylinder back into the pistol, and stepped off the porch. "All right," he shouted. "Let's go, let's go, let's go." He waved toward the door with the weapon. The speaker was buzzing again, but Sartaj wasn't listening. "Come on, Bashir Ali, get that thing down." Bashir Ali raised a hand, and Sartaj pointed a rigid finger at him. "Get that fucking thing moving."

Bashir Ali crouched in his high seat, and the behemoth lurched forward, past Sartaj, and smashed against the building with a dull crunch, with a soaring cloud of plaster. But after a moment, when the bulldozer pulled back, the building still stood complete and sacrosanct, the door not even dented. Only the video camera had been injured: it lay next to the door, flattened neatly halfway along its length. A long jeer rose from the crowd down the street. It grew louder when Bashir Ali switched off his engine.

"What the hell was that?" Sartaj said when Bashir Ali stepped down on the shaded side of the bulldozer.

"What do you expect when you won't let me do it the way it should be done?"

They were both wiping plaster from their noses. On the sunlit side of the bulldozer the crowd was chanting "*Jai* Gaitonde."

"Do you know the way to do it?"

Bashir Ali shrugged. "I have an idea."

"All right," Sartaj said. "Fine. Do it how you want."

"Get out of my way then. And get your men back from the building."

As Bashir Ali spun his steed on the gravel, Sartaj saw that he was an artist. He operated with flicks and thumps of his hands on the driving sticks, leaning into the direction of his turns, in sympathy with the groaning gears underneath. He raised and then lowered his blade, positioning it precisely, with its lower extended edge level with the door. He reversed ten feet, twenty, thirty, his arm jauntily on the back of his seat. He came at the building at a diagonal, and as he went past Sartaj he flashed a white grin. This time there was a scream of metal, and when the violent juddering of the bulldozer had ceased Sartaj saw that the door had been peeled back, inward. A crack ran three feet up into the masonry.

"Back!" Sartaj shouted. He was running forward, pistol held in front of him. "Get back, get back." Then Bashir Ali was gone, and Sartaj was leaning against one side of the doorway, and Katekar on the other. An icy wind came out and Sartaj felt it drying the sweat on his face and his forearms. Suddenly, for a moment, he envied Gaitonde all his air-conditioners, the frigid climate control won by his audacity. And for a moment, rising from somewhere deep in his hips, unbidden and nauseating, like a buoyant dribble of bile, was a tiny bubble of admiration. He took a deep breath. "Do you think the building will hold?" he said.

Katekar nodded. He was looking in, through the door, and his face was dark with rage. Sartaj touched the tip of his tongue to his upper lip, felt the dryness, and then they went in. Sartaj went ahead, and at the first door inside Katekar went by him. Behind them followed the rustling of the others. Sartaj was trying to hear above the thunderous unclenching of his heart. He had done entries like this before, and it never got better. It was very cold inside the building, and the light was low and luxurious. There was carpet under their feet. There were four square rooms, all white, all empty. And at the exact center of the building was a very steep, almost vertical, metal staircase. Sartaj nodded at Katekar, and then followed him down. The metal door at the bottom opened easily, but it was very heavy, and when Katekar finally had it back Sartaj saw that it was as thick as a hatch to a bank vault. Inside it was dark. Sartaj was shivering uncontrollably. He moved past Katekar, and now he saw a bluish light on the left. Katekar slid past his shoulders and went out wide, and then they shuffled forward, weapons held rigidly before them. Another step and now in the new angle Sartaj saw a figure, shoulders, in front of a bank of haze-filled TV monitors, a brown hand near the controls on a black panel.

"Gaitonde!" Sartaj hadn't meant to shout—a gentle admonitory assertion was the preferred tone—and now he squeezed his voice down. "Gaitonde, put your hands up very slowly." There was no movement from the figure in the darkness. Sartaj tightened his finger painfully on his trigger, and fought the urge to fire, and fire again. "Gaitonde. Gaitonde?"

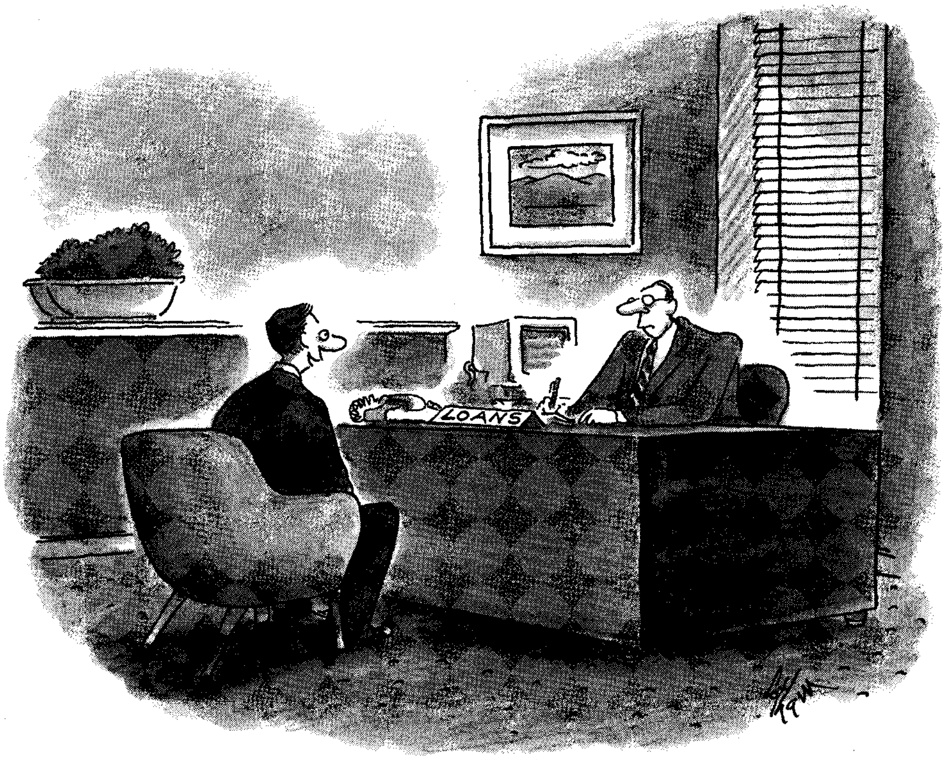
From Sartaj's right, where Katekar was, came a very small click, and even as Sartaj turned his head the room was flooded with white neon radiance, generous and encompassing and clean. And in the universal illumination Gaitonde sat, revealed, a black pistol in his left hand, and half his head gone.

It was night when Sartaj came up the metal stairs. He left underneath him the symmetrical rooms of the cube, which the two police commissioners below were now calling a safe house. The three lab technicians were dusting it, and Katekar was guarding it with a proprietor's fierce watchfulness. Sartaj stood shadowed in the lee of the metal door. There were reporters waiting behind a row of police jeeps. He checked his collar, and ran his hands along the sides of his turban, and stepped out. In the flare of the flashbulbs, he found that he could not leave behind Gaitonde's stare. Gaitonde had looked at him in the first sudden light; his right eye had bulged with a manic intensity. Sartaj had seen the fragile tracery of pink lines, the hard black of the pupil, the shining seep of fluid from the inside corner, which despite himself he had thought of as a tear. But it was only the body reacting to the gigantic blow that had exploded everything from the chin up on the other side of his face, slicing from the left nostril into the forehead.

"Enough," Sartaj said, and shouldered his way through the photographers. Soon he was at the wheel of a Gypsy, winding through the heavy traffic. He didn't know where he was going. He thought, It's finished, Sardarji, finished. It's only work. Enough. But he could still see water slapping against the rust-brown side of a boat, a cloud-laden sky, a figure sitting in the bow looking toward the horizon.

Sartaj turned the jeep's wheel violently to the left and was now driving along a familiar road, which led to the sloping beach at Kausa where he used to go picnicking during college. The curving waterfront lined with tiny fishing villages had been a great secret then. Now there was a huge yellow hotel, built in an epic arc to match the bay. The hotel belonged to a family in the construction business, and the permission required to build in a protected area had come from a minister close to Gaitonde. There was nothing to be done about it now. The villagers' sons and daughters worked in it, as gardeners, waiters, and maids. The hotel was far ahead in the dark but Sartaj could see it clearly, like an enormous wall stretching from right to left. In its rooftop bar, Sartaj had once drunk a Scotch. He veered to the side of the road and stopped the Gypsy.

Sartaj sat for a long while. Then he moved the jeep in a slow half circle across the road, and went back to Kailashpada. ♦



"Just once, I'd like to be able to write a check without getting thrown in jail."

FICTION

HUSBAND AND SON

Watching a young dancer—his godlike movements, the ring of his ankle bells—a woman recalls what it was like to be in love.

BY RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

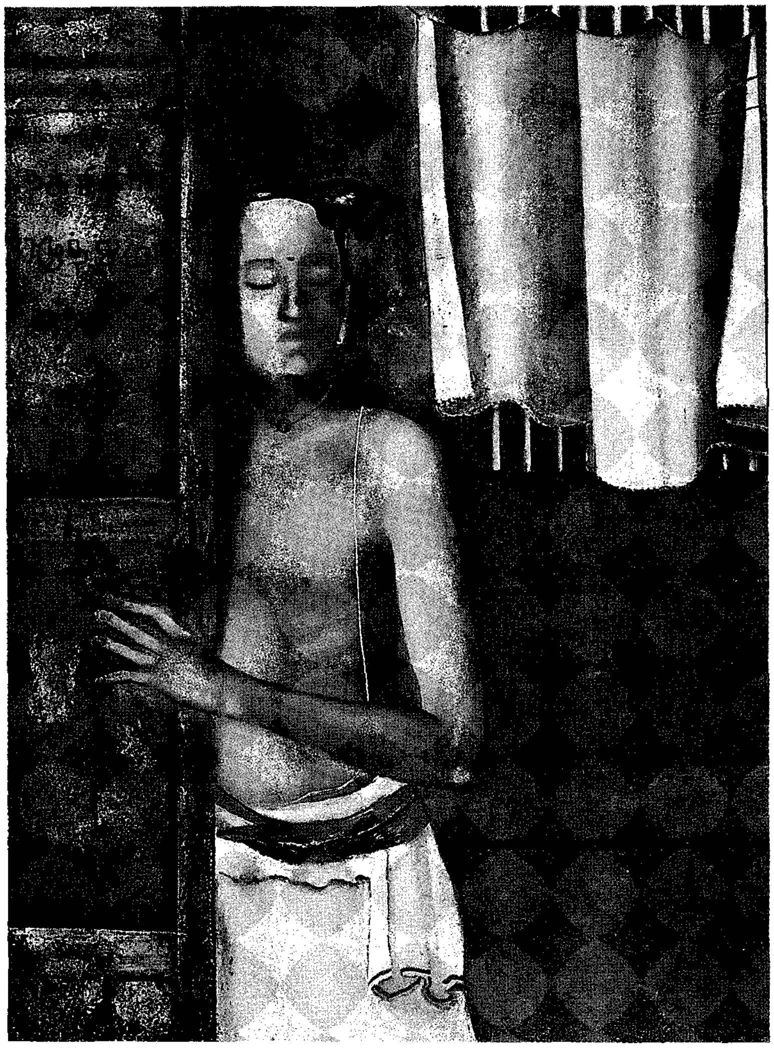
IN his latter days—and even that is now more than thirty years ago—he was always referred to as "the old man." Or "the old man up there," for he was by that time living almost entirely on the roof of the family house. The only sound that came from him was the Vedic hymns he sang at dawn; his voice, though cracked, sounded very sweet. His wife, Vijay, was left to rattle around by herself in their large mansion, with nothing to do except bully the servants. At the beginning of every summer she had the carpets rolled up and stowed away, as though her father-in-law and his guests were still there to be kept cool amid marble floors sprinkled with rosewater; and every winter the quilts were stuffed with new cotton, though there was no one now to sleep under them except her. The old man on the roof just covered himself with a blanket, as threadbare with age as he was.

She spent many hours sitting on her veranda, looking out over the River Jumna. During the monsoon, it regularly flooded, and one year they had had to go up and down the streets in boats. This was before the Ring Road and the fortifying walls and the overpass were built, which cut off the view of the river from their house. But even in her day changes were taking place. The mansion at the rear, which had belonged to a prosperous Muslim family, had been divided up among refugees from Pakistan. And the house next door, where a famous eye surgeon and his family had lived on a lavish scale, had been taken over by a school of Indian dance, sponsored by the ministries for art and culture.

Vijay welcomed these new activities around her. Despite her age, she was full of energy. Her parents-in-law and their entire generation were dead. Her son, Harish—in his thirties now but too busy to get married—was posted in Bengal, where he was an important government officer. And the old man was becoming more and more eccentric. He had cut down his meals to one a day, consisting of a few chapatis and a vegetable or lentil dish, for he wanted to eat no more than the poor could afford. Vijay's appetite had remained healthy, and she still needed her regular meals, with meat or fish. The old man did not grudge her this rich food and often came to keep her company while she ate. He read to her from those strange books he had, or expounded his even stranger ideas. She didn't understand or even listen much, but it gave her the opportunity to keep a sharp watch on him. Why was he holding his jaw like that? Next day she hauled him off to the dentist, overriding his protests. Did horses go to the dentist, he asked. Or when it turned out he had a hernia and a truss was prescribed. Did horses wear them?

He had always been careless of his health, careless of himself. In the past, when they were both young, it was because he was so busy, immersed in public affairs. Although he came from a pro-British family—his father had been a High Court judge—he himself had been deeply involved in the Indian independence movement and had spent several years in jail. Later, after Independence, he had been elected to Parliament and had been given a Cabinet post. Those had been wonderful years for Vijay. They had moved out of the family house on the Jumna to one of the former British residences requisitioned by the new government of India. An armed sentry stood at their gate, supplemented by a whole posse of policemen when the Prime Minister or other members of the Cabinet came to the house. Important decisions on national and international policy had been taken in this house. Foreign dignitaries had been entertained there, and they themselves had been driven in their official limousine to the President's palace to attend banquets in honor of visiting prime ministers, or royal guests from the neighboring kingdoms.

All this was still going on in New Delhi, on an ever larger and more sumptuous scale, but she and the old man were no longer part of it. He had resigned his offices and all his honors after only a few years of holding them, and they had moved out of the official residence and back to the family house on the Jumna. She had protested—what was the use of all their sacrifices and his years in jail if they were not now to reap the benefits? But she had acquiesced, because she realized how unhappy he was, disgusted with the politics of power. And she could not bear to see him unhappy: it was his cheerfulness that had from the first drawn her to him, the sprightly way he moved around, humming a tune to himself. Urdu love lyrics it had been then, or Hindi patriotic songs, also the "Marseillaise" and the "Internationale." Even on their wedding day, when they sat together before the sacred fire and the rest of the family was full of the usual marriage fuss and fury, he had muttered irreverent jokes from behind the strings of flowers that hid his face from her, as hers was hidden from him; instead of weeping, the way brides are supposed to, she had had trouble stifling giggles. Their marriage had been arranged while he was still abroad, taking his degree at Cambridge. The year was 1923. When he returned, the old man—he was called Prakash then—was twenty-five years old, full of high spirits and high ideals. She liked him immediately. He wasn't handsome, but he had a very nice face, with spectacles, and a mouth that was always twitching with suppressed laughter. He rarely laughed out loud, but she did all the time. Even during sex—and they had had a lot of it: oh, my God, what a lot of sex—he had to put his hand over her mouth so that the rest of the family wouldn't hear the racket she made. They had been given a bedroom of their own, but all around them were the rooms of other members of his large family. With the door shut, they felt quite private. Besides making love, they also talked a lot, and he told her his ideas, which she adopted as her own. Her eyes blazed when he spoke of the necessity of throwing out the English. During the years he was in jail, she quarrelled with his family and with her own, all of whom, far from throwing out the English, wanted to be like them and to be allowed to join their clubs. He never argued with his family but only made jokes. His mother and aunts, the poor things, he said, were every day oppressed by three terrible problems: What to wear? Where to go? What to do?



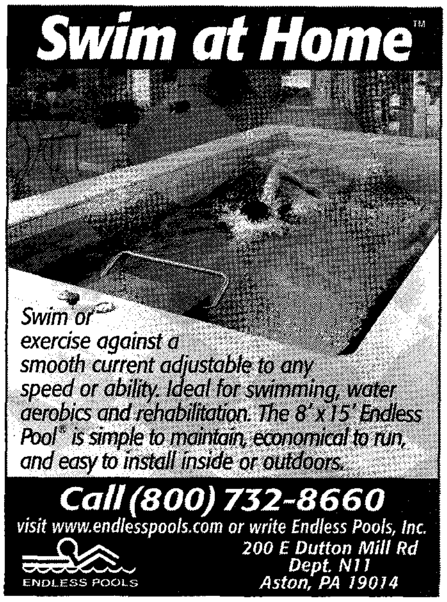
ANJOLIE ELA MENON, "NAMBOODRI" (1992), COLLECTION OF KAVITA SINGH

Nowadays, sitting on her veranda, with the old man up there on the roof, Vijay found herself with the same problems, or at least two of them. What to wear she had settled long ago. For a time, under his influence, she had sacrificed her fine saris for the patriotic homespun cottons he wore, but they felt scratchy and coarse, and she soon went back to her imported silks with embroidered borders. To her regret, he never again wore the suits he had brought from England, but she kept them hanging in her wardrobe. She touched them sometimes, stroking the sleeves of tweed and wool and sniffing at them for the last aroma of the English cigarettes he had chain-smoked.

EVERY evening she walked by the river, sometimes joining the groups of hymn singers clustered around a priest or holy person. She was not religious, but she sang as lustily as all the others. She also sat cross-legged in a circle of friendship with simple housewives, whom she advised on birth control and other topics they were eager to learn about. Everyone knew and liked her; when she bought from the shops in the compound wall, the owners told her the correct price, as though she were not rich but one of them. As soon as the dance school moved into the eye surgeon's house, she paid a visit and was shown around and watched the pupils at their practice. After that, she went every day, she liked it so much. The students were not at all the sort you would expect to be students of Indian dance (that is, the illegitimate daughters of temple dancers) but young girls from good families, for whom the Indian classical arts had replaced the piano as part of their accomplishments. The teachers were still of the traditional class, hereditary musicians and dancers transmitting their art from father to son. They were delighted with this new source of income, especially the old men, who had spent their lives turning over the sparse coins that came their way from weddings and festivals. Now they could be civil servants under the ministries for art and culture, with regular salaries and pensions and provident funds. Those who were too old for the job had sent their sons or nephews, so that there were a few young teachers, too, with whom the girls fell in love. All day the house was filled with the sound of ankle bells and drumbeats, of notes plucked from many lyres and the laughter of light-minded girls. Sticks of incense, rose and jasmine, burned in honor of the patron goddess of music.

Vijay, as was her way, made friends with everyone, but her favorite was Ram, one of the dance teachers. He came from Jaipur and was the nephew of a famous exponent of the Kathak form of dance. His mother tongue was some strange Rajasthani dialect, and the Hindi in which he had to communicate in Delhi was atrocious and made everyone laugh. Vijay also laughed. She tried to make him speak more correctly, but he couldn't learn, or wouldn't. He said he would like to learn English, which she spoke well and he not at all. He admired her for her higher education and for being rich. She invited him to the house, even sometimes to eat with her; it was good to have someone share the big meals the cook prepared every day for her alone. At first Ram was shy because he didn't know how to eat rice at a table with a spoon and fork. When she taught him, he was quick to learn, and eager, for it was his ambition to be sent abroad and perform for foreign audiences in their big halls.

Sometimes the old man came down and joined them. The first time, Ram was astonished to see such a shabby person in this grand house and even more amazed to learn that he was Vijay's husband. But when she told him who this husband was, or had been, Ram's attitude changed completely. The next time



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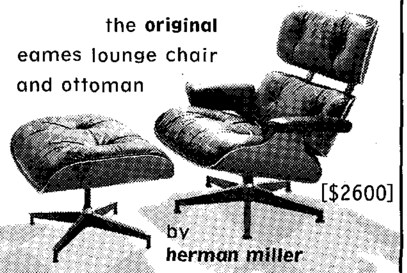

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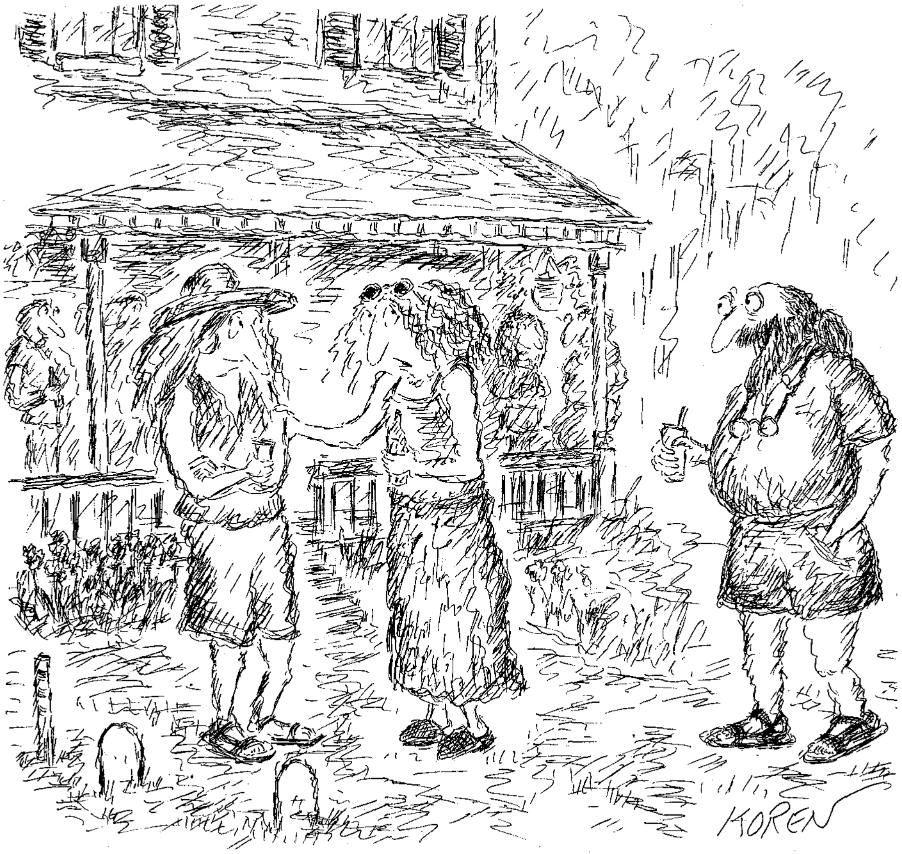
he saw the old man he stooped to touch his feet, in the traditional gesture of respect—or at least he tried to, but the old man prevented him by jumping backward and flapping his hands at him, as though shooing away some insect. Vijay covered her mouth to stifle her laughter; she had always been amused by the way the old man dealt with people who tried to pay him respect. When he was a Cabinet minister, she had seen him literally turn and flee before a group of citizens advancing toward him with garlands to hang in honor around his neck.

The old man accepted Ram's frequent visits without comment. Perhaps he did not always notice him. Sometimes it seemed to Vijay that he did not even see or notice her, he appeared so lost in his thoughts or in his reading. He carried his strange books around with him—old books, falling to pieces, from which he would occasionally read a passage aloud. Ram listened with the utmost respect, swaying his head in appreciation of what he heard, though Vijay knew he understood even less of it than she did. In the old days, when they were first married, the old man, Prakash, had read to her out of the books he had brought from his studies in England: Tom Paine, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx. She hadn't always understood them entirely but had grasped the gist of their ideas. Now what he read was way beyond her. But so was the old man himself. She understood him less and less but accepted him wholly in all his eccentricity; and so did Ram, honoring him as supremely noble, a sage who had given up the world. The three of them had begun to form a family group, Vijay and Ram at the dining table enjoying one of the cook's sumptuous meals while the old man read aloud, out of his tattered book, about the soul and the Absolute and their identity-in-difference.

THESE pleasant hours had to cease when their son arrived from Bengal to confer with his superiors at the ministry of home affairs. His official visits occurred two or three times a year and gave him a chance to check up on his parents. He had taken charge of their finances some years ago. This had become necessary when the old man was on the point of giving everything away, including the house, which he wished to have converted into a beggars' home. Now Harish had settled the house and all moneys on his mother, under his



"Here comes an out-of-print collection of short stories."

personal supervision, relieving his father of the millstone of earthly possessions. When Harish was there, his parents were on their best behavior. The old man remained quietly in his room on the roof; Vijay did not visit the dance school or anywhere else in the neighborhood but stayed at home, supervising the servants. On the first day of Harish's arrival, Ram had come as usual, but after that he stayed away. He knew Harish's type well, for civil servants exactly like him arrived for an inspection every time the government grant to the school came up for renewal. Then students and teachers were meek as mice, their lessons went like clockwork, and it was not until the inspection was over that everything reverted to normal. Similarly, it was not until Harish left (fortunately, he was too busy to stay long) that Ram came back to eat his meals, the old man descended from the roof, and the three of them resumed what had become their regular routine.

Vijay had always been proud of her son, who had been a brilliant student and had stood first in the administrative-service exam. She boasted that with such a father, of course, nothing less could be expected of him; but really Harish did not take after his father at all—his brilliance was of quite a different order. The old man had questioned all authority, whereas Harish did everything he was told from above, with no questions at all. He blamed his father for retreating into his own eccentricity instead of serving his country. Vijay found it hard to defend the father against the son, for she had never really understood why the old man had had to give up everything—except, as she told Harish, that he had been unhappy with the way power was being misused by those who had seized it. Harish waved this away; personal feelings were of no account at a time when the country needed to be guided by men of talent and integrity. When he said this, his spectacles gleamed the way the old man's used to when he spoke of his ideals. But with the old man you never could be sure whether he was laughing or not, while with Harish you could be sure that he was not.

Vijay loved her son dearly, but it had always been difficult for her to express her feelings for him. From childhood on, he hated to be kissed and fondled, hated to have his hair combed by her as

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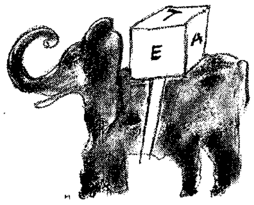
she longed to do. Ram was the opposite. His own mother was far away, and so were his many sisters, and he missed their endearments. On hot summer afternoons he and Vijay kept each other company, sitting on the marble floor of her drawing room directly under the ceiling fan, which brushed them with a cool breeze, like a delicious shiver. He leaned against her knees while she combed his hair, playing with it and exclaiming over it. Harish's hair had always been straight and thin (it had begun to fall out when he was still in his twenties), but Ram's clustered over his head in bunches of pitch-black curls that she could wind and rewind over her fingers. Each curl was plump, like Ram himself, and, also like him, shiny with scented oil. Inhaling its fragrance, she could not resist kissing his hair and then his cheek, which was rounded like a peach and rarely needed shaving. He smiled and looked up into her eyes and fondly murmured, "Ma." From the beginning, he had called her mother, but it was only lately that she had begun to call him "my sweet son." Because that was what he was to her, in a way that no one had ever been. When she was tired, he massaged her feet, as he used to do for his mother, cracking the toes. The only other person who had done this for her was the old man, when they were both young and forever making love.



Once, the old man came in unexpectedly while Ram was massaging her feet. He had come to read them a passage from one of his books, and he started reading it at once: it was about knowledge that is real and knowledge that is illusory. She sat up—she had been lying on a mat spread on the floor—and Ram stopped massaging her feet, and they both listened respectfully. When the old man finished, he shuffled out again, without saying anything more. Ram wanted to continue his massage, but her mood was spoiled. It was almost as if they had been doing something wrong, though she knew they had not.

Later that day she went up to see the old man—she did this at least twice daily, to check on him, or to make sure he had eaten his food. But that day she lingered longer than usual, chatting away but with pauses to give him the opportunity to say something if he wished to. When he didn't, she herself started on another topic, and then talked to him about Ram. She said Ram was the wrong name for him—it was impossible to connect him with that intractable god whose wife had to be so far above suspicion that he had banished her, though she was pure and innocent. It was Krishna whom this Ram resembled. "*Our* Ram," she said, glaring at the old man when he did not respond—Krishna with his flute and all his milkmaids, who loved him though he teased them mercilessly, mischievous boy that he was. Not that our Ram was in the least mischievous. On the contrary, never had she known a boy to show so much respect and devotion to his elders. "*You* never ask if my legs are hurting," she accused the old man. "Dr. Sehgal says it's the beginning of arthritis, but what do you care? I could be lame and blind and you wouldn't even notice, you or your son." The old man still had said nothing, but he looked up at her, and when she looked back at him she saw that one lens of his spectacles was cracked right across. Exclaiming impatiently, she snatched them off his nose and went to have them fixed by the optician that same day.

Her friendship with Ram continued to grow and grow. Only it wasn't friendship, it was something else, some other relationship that they often speculated about, deciding that it had been carried over from a previous life or several of them. They might have been mother and son in one incarnation, husband and wife in another, brother and sister, even lovers—they teased each other, like Layla and Majnun or Romeo and Juliet. The emotions of all these relationships had been infused into their veins in this birth, so that they could not help being what they were with each other. In the cool of the evening they walked by the river, his hand in hers like a child's, or with their intertwined hands swinging between them like those of friends. The hymn singers around the holy man made room for them to join their circle, as did the groups of gossiping housewives; everyone smiled over them, the old woman and the youth, and the way they cared for each other.

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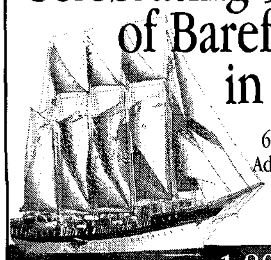

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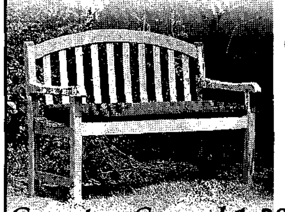

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bunch of flowers nodding behind each ear. They would drive into the big bazaar opposite the Red Fort and on into the cloth market and the lane where gold-embroidered slippers were sold. The owners sent for iced sherbet, while Vijay and Ram pointed up to the shelves, to have more and more bolts of cloth brought down, until there was a glittering sea of silks and muslins spread around them. Ram had a fine appreciation of quality; he was a dancer, of course, an artiste with a highly developed sense of beauty. She loved to watch him examining the embroidery on a kurta or rubbing a delicate silk between his fingers. What he liked best always turned out to be the most expensive item in the shop. He would modestly lay it aside, saying, "No, no, it's too much," but she drew it forward again and insisted till he gave way. Then she was doubly rewarded—by his joy in the new acquisition and by the tender gratitude he expressed toward her, the donor.

WHEN Harish, on his next visit, made his customary scrutiny of her accounts, he was surprised by her expenditures. She explained that there had been visits to the dentist, a loan to the cook, who was arranging his daughter's marriage, and clothes to be stitched for the old man—and did Harish have any idea what a chore it was to make him wear them? Harish nodded, remembering many altercations between his parents. For years now she had wanted to throw out the tattered blanket that was his only covering in the winter; once, she had even tried to steal it, but the old man had made such a fuss that she had had to give it back. It seemed to Harish that the old man was getting worse and worse, but what could he, what could anyone, do about it? Usually he just shook his head and shrugged, but on this last visit he detected something in his father that made him ask, "Is he all right?"

"How do you mean?" She was on her guard immediately. The old man was her responsibility, no one else's.

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Harish, too, had often enough heard about the horse, so he knew it was use-

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less to say anything more, and the next day he went back to his district in Bengal, where many duties awaited him.

Vijay had not needed her son to point out that there was a change in the old man. Didn't she know him better than anyone, every bit of him? She detected a sadness in him that expressed itself only in his silence. She listened for this silence early in the morning, when he had been in the habit of singing hymns to the rising sun. Now the sun rose and he was silent and she fretted. Was he really ill? His cheeks had been hollow for many years now, usually with gray stubble on them. She had recently had the last of his teeth extracted, causing his mouth to sink in, which perhaps accounted for his grieved expression.

When the old man stopped coming down to read to them, Ram asked after him. Vijay explained that he had these periods of withdrawal when he was very busy with his thoughts—one had to expect it in a philosophical person. Ram looked awed for a moment; then they returned to their playful time together, enjoying each other's company. In the mornings she often strolled over to the dance school to watch him give his lesson. He had a class of nine girls, all eager to learn his Kathak style of dance. They were not talented, and he became very impatient with them, which made them giggle in a mixture of fright and delight. They were all in love with him. Sometimes, exasperated by their ineptitude, he showed them how the steps should be done, and they held their breath to watch him—the strength of his stamping feet, the imperious ring of his ankle bells, the muscles of his round young arms rippling in the godlike movements of his dance. He was always exquisitely dressed now in the Lucknow kurtas that Vijay bought him. They had also begun to patronize the jewellers' lane in the bazaar, to buy little diamond studs to fasten these kurtas. Neither of them had been able to resist the ruby ring he now wore on his middle finger, or the one in his ear, or the gold chain that encircled his smooth, sturdy neck. When he danced, a skinny young musician accompanied him on the drum, beating out the rhythm with frenetic fingers, flinging himself about, long hair flying; but no one had a glance to spare for him. All eyes were on Ram dancing and all were shining, Vijay's along with the girls'.

Alone at night, she imagined what the girls must be feeling, and she recalled the sensations of her own youth, what it had been like to be in love. With her, it had always and only been the old man. She had been very proud to be married—of course, it was every girl's dream, to be a wife, with a husband of her own and a bunch of household keys at her waist. She had been especially fortunate. Her father-in-law was rich, the family was tolerant and moderately modern, the house was run on a lavish scale, with nothing wanting for comfort or even luxury. It was an atmosphere in which a young wife could bloom and flourish. Best of all was Prakash himself. He was terribly in love with her. She was beautiful in those days, with wide hips springing from a small waist, and she had walked around the house lightly on bare feet, her gold jewelry jingling as if in celebration of her loveliness. Before others, he retained his cool manner and his own brand of cynical humor, but when they were alone together—the moment they locked their bedroom door behind them—he became ardent, adoring. He even fell at her feet, though she tried to prevent him, and when she couldn't she got down on the floor with him and they clung together and rolled around, laughing and kissing. One year, during an epidemic, she had typhoid fever and he stayed at her bedside, changing cold compresses on her head; when she woke at night, tossing and burning, she heard him murmur as if in prayer—but that must have been an illusion caused by her delirium, because as a young man he never prayed, it would have been against his principles.

In those years she had slept so soundly, sinking so effortlessly into deep dreamless sleep, that it was a joke in the family that she could hardly be made to get up. Prakash would wake early and tiptoe around and give strict instructions that she was not to be disturbed. But nowadays, during the time of her growing friendship with Ram, she spent many hours of the night awake, helpless under the press of her thoughts and memories. She still slept in the bedroom she had once shared with her husband; when she felt very lonely, she went up to the roof to see him. He slept on a servant's string cot, which on hot nights he dragged from under the tin roof out to the open terrace. He did not need a mosquito net; probably his blood was too thin for mosquitoes to bother with. He always sat up the moment he saw her, as if he had been waiting for her. He smiled at her, a toothless smile that was so painful to her that she turned her eyes away. It was not only that it was a very old man's smile but that it held something apologetic in it. Yes, it was as if he were apologizing to her—but for what? For being old, for being the way he was now, for everything he had given up and had made her give up? When he had first begun to live as an ascetic, he had also given up sex between them, though they both still desired it. It had been several years before her menopause, and those had been difficult years for her.

"Go to sleep, " she told him, and he lay down obediently, not wishing to be troublesome. She walked to the front of the terrace, with its view of the river. On moonlit nights she could see the water stretching far into the horizon, lambent like the sky itself in its veil of stars. The other side overlooked the dance school. The terrace was slightly lower than hers, so that she could see the beds placed there side by side in a row. In the summer, the dance teachers and their musicians slept up there; they were all men, some of them young like Ram and not yet married, and the older ones with wives left behind in their home towns. Even when there was no moon, she could make out the row of beds because each one had a white mosquito net that shone in the dark. She could never distinguish who was sleeping under which net, not even when there was a moon. Everything was shrouded and still, except when a sudden dust storm blew up, or it rained. Then they would all start up and there was a confusion of white-clad figures scurrying for shelter. She had no time to linger and watch, for she had to help the old man drag his bed into his tin-roofed shed.

A TERRIBLE scandal broke out in the dance school: one of the students from a good family was found to be pregnant. It was difficult to imagine how this could have happened in that institution. The schedule was arranged

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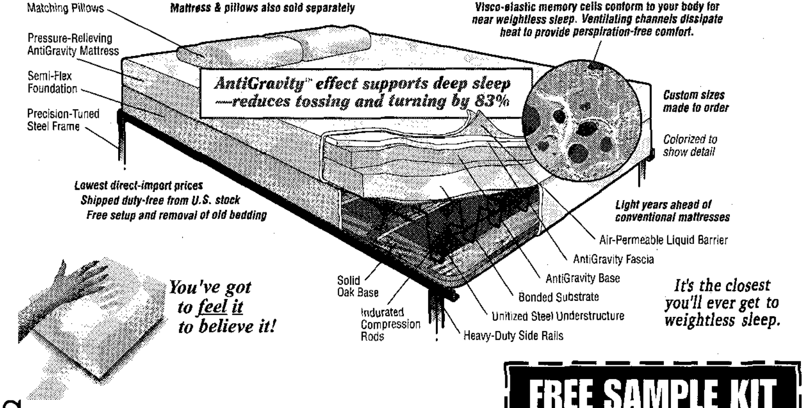
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19 DATA (*a tad* rev.)
20 TSAR (anag.)

DOWN
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2 F(LASH)LIGHT
3 FAR + SI (*si* = French for "if")
5 RABBI + T EARS
6 EMBLEM (hidden)
7 WADE (*weighed* hom.)
11 SIESTA (hidden)
13 NASSER (anag.)
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16 H(E)AD

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in such a way that no student was ever alone with a teacher, and after hours the inmates of the school lived a communal life, almost like monks. Nevertheless, it had happened. The girl was already quite big, and under pressure from her parents admitted that she had been with one of the teachers; under further pressure, she named Ram. He denied it absolutely, vehemently. The girl was a liar, and anyway much too thin and dark-complexioned for him to bother with. The other teachers agreed and believed him, but they were in a dilemma. Although the girl's family had sent her away to Simla in an attempt to suppress the scandal, news of it might leak out and reach the ministries for art and culture. Then the school's financial grant would be revoked, forcing it to close, and all the teachers would return to their meagre, salaryless days. If Ram confessed, he would be made an example of and dismissed. But he refused to confess, protesting his innocence with indignation and tears.

He tried to hide his trouble from Vijay, but it was not possible. His feelings were too volatile, overflowed too spontaneously to be concealed from anyone, let alone from Vijay, with her mother's heart for him. He sought refuge in her house more often than ever, but his high spirits were extinguished. He stared dully in front of him, and when she first asked, then urged, then begged him to confide in her he shook his head in dumb despair. Trying to cheer him up, she took him shopping every day now, and on a bigger scale than before. They went straight to the jewellers' lane, where they bought many large and shiny items. Fastening an imported gold watch around his wrist, she felt rewarded to see his eyes light up with some of their old sparkle; but this lasted hardly longer than it took to pay and leave the shop, when again he fell into his mysterious depression.

Harish, on his next visit, found the house changed—dark and gloomy, with the servants neglecting their work and his mother too preoccupied to supervise them in her energetic way. The old man sat silent and alone on the roof; he no longer came down, not even when Vijay, kept out late shopping with Ram, forgot to bring up his meal. Ram, instead of tactfully disappearing during Harish's visit, stayed close by Vijay's side. But the worst was when Harish exam-

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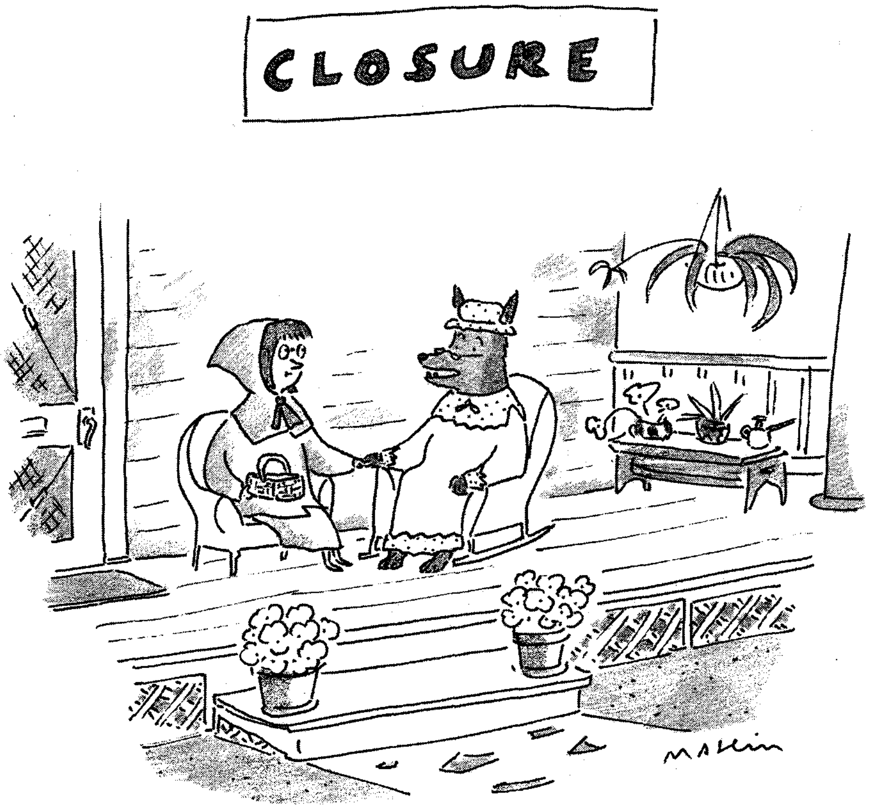

"And all this time I didn't think you'd understand why I ate your grandma and took her place."

ined his mother's accounts. Unable or unwilling to explain the enormous increase in her expenditures, she became defiant and shouted at her son. He tried to shush her—"The servants will hear"—but this only incensed her more. "Let them hear, let everyone hear, what sort of a son I have brought into the world!" The noise she made brought the old man down to see what had happened; but when she told him, "It's nothing to do with you," he turned, silent as always nowadays, and went back to his place on the roof.

When Harish scolded the servants for their neglect, they looked sullen. At first they only muttered, throwing out hints that he should look further than a bit of dust on the furniture. Soon they spoke of the shopping expeditions, and drew his attention to the gold watch and the diamond studs in the neckband of the new shirt. And the meals that had to be cooked for the visitor, now three meals a day, with cold drinks and snacks in between. They were not the kind of servants who should be expected to serve a low-caste dancer. Moreover, if they were to reveal what they knew about the goings on next door, he would see it all—and then they did reveal it, every detail of the scandal, which they had learned from the school's sweeper woman and the shopkeeper who sold betel and cigarettes and knew everything.

When Harish told his mother, she rejected the news outright. She ran first to the girl's family, who denied everything. Ram, too, denied everything. She made him swear on what was most precious to him, and he swore on her life. Harish took action on his own. He used his influence with colleagues in the ministries for art and culture to institute an inquiry into the affairs of the school. This done, he left for his district and let matters take their course. Thus the scandal was uncovered, and the official report advised the withdrawal of the grant and the closing of the school, on the ground of moral turpitude. However, this verdict was subject to appeal provided the miscreant was exposed and immediate disciplinary action taken against him. Ram's dismissal could no longer be delayed. That very day he had to pack up his belongings and leave the school forever.

Carrying his three bundles, he went

to say goodbye to Vijay. She was deeply shocked, she would not accept the situation. But he was innocent! He hung his head, he said nothing. He was innocent! she cried again—had he not sworn on her own life? For answer, he fell to the floor at her feet and lay there, absolutely still. He resisted all her attempts to make him rise, to speak, to answer or assent to her protestations of his innocence. At last realization dawned on her. She said in a cold dead voice, "Get up." He obeyed, and when he glanced at her face it was closed against him as against a stranger. "Maji," he begged, but her expression didn't change, and when he tried to take her hand to hold it against his cheek, as he had done a thousand times before, she snatched it away. He burst into tears, but she continued to sit rigid, with her big knees planted wide apart as if made of stone, and her eyes fixed on the wall above him.

Although she said nothing, he poured out his confession. He did not try to justify himself. Yes, it was the girl who had taken the initiative, had tempted him, but he had followed her lead, and with abandon. Every night he had crept from under his mosquito net and let himself out of the house, so silently and secretly that neither watchman nor sweeper ever caught a glimpse of him. Silently, secretly, he ran to her house, three lanes away, where she was waiting to let him in. While the household slept, two stories above them, they had done what they did together right there on the gold brocade sofa of her father's drawing room, where he entertained his guests; the smell of the kebabs that had been eaten and the whiskey that had been drunk still lingered. She knew where the bottles were kept, and they fornicated and drank whiskey together, till the household began to stir at dawn. This went on night after night, for weeks on end—those same weeks when he and Vijay had walked hand in hand by the river and gone shopping in the bazaar. And there was more, more—for he was now in a confessing mood, and all his wickedness came rushing out of him. Sometimes they were so overwhelmed by desire that even in the school, after her class with him, they crept into a cubbyhole where winter clothing was stored in a steel trunk and lay together in the dark, holding their breath if they heard voices or footsteps passing outside.

After he told her everything, he remained standing before her with his head bowed. He did not dare ask for her forgiveness, nor did she offer it. She remained sitting there as before, stonelike—until suddenly she rose and her arms flailed as she beat him about the head and shoulders. He put up his hands to shield himself but did not utter a sound. When she had finished beating him, she abused him. She called him a thief, and a scoundrel, who had insinuated himself into her house and her heart for what he could get out of her, for the money she spent on him, the jewelry with which she adorned him. When she said that, he said, "No, Maji," in a still, broken voice.

"And you laughed about me with her—with your prostitute. You said wait till you see what the old woman will buy for me."

"No, Maji," he said again, in the same voice.

She slapped his face. "Don't lie to me! All this time you've lied to me and I believed you."

"I never lied to you," he protested, but she slapped him again.

"You said you were my son, that you loved me like a son."

"It's the truth. I love you like a son."

"Liar! Liar!"

Silently, he bent down to his three bundles and untied them. He took out everything she had given him—the clothes, the gold-embroidered slippers, the ornaments. When he had finished, there was only one little bundle left, and he tied it up again. The rest of the things he placed in a pile at her feet; last, he took off his new watch and laid it on top of everything. He picked up his remaining bundle and went to the door. There he turned around to her, not as if he hoped to be called back but perhaps for just one word from her. She said nothing and he left, the mark of her hand still red on his cheek.

DURING the following days, there were times when she wanted to call him back. She had no idea where he had gone, and when she went to the school to find out it was as if he had never been there. A new teacher was taking his class, an ugly, squat, pockmarked man whom the girls teased till he lost his temper with them. Ankle bells still tinkled, drums and lyres played, but now

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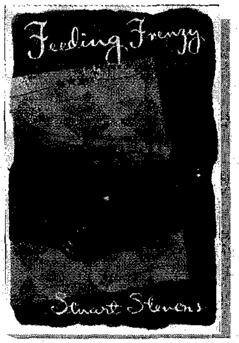

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all this was unbearable to her. That day, she went to the railway station and picked her way among the crowd to peer at the figures lying asleep on the platform with their cloth bundles of food and their water jugs, waiting for trains that had not arrived or had not departed. But Ram's train, if he ever took one, must have started long ago, and he had already reached his home town and the musicians' alley with the broken-down house where his mother and sisters lived. Or he was still on the train, crammed in on his third-class seat, with his bundle on his knees.

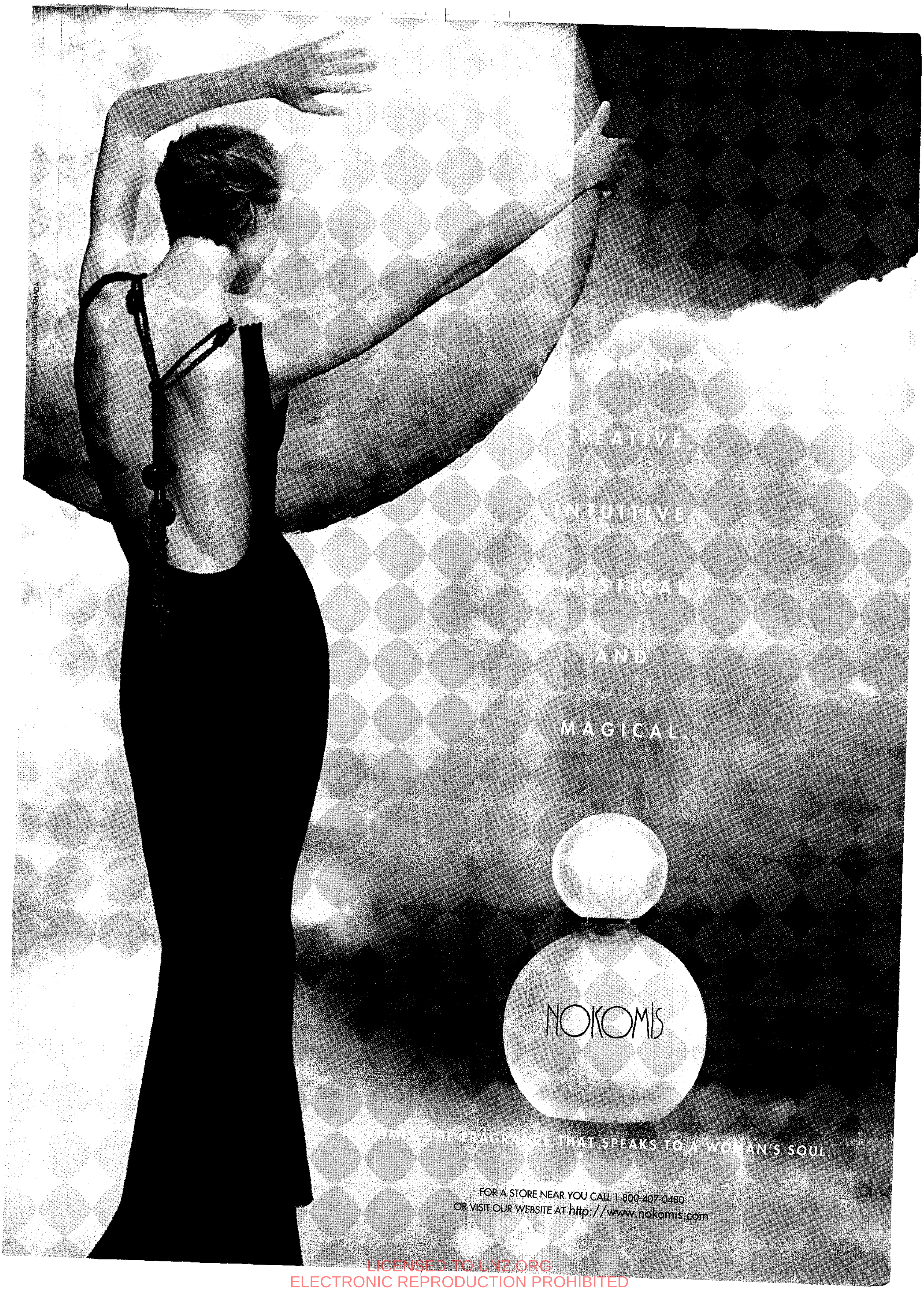
She had nothing to look forward to. It was like that time when the old man first resigned his office and they had had to give up the perks and pleasures of power that she had begun so much to enjoy; and the silent years that followed and her lonely solitude as he withdrew more and more. Now that he had even stopped singing his Vedic hymns, the silence was total; whenever she went up there she found him perched on his bed, his head sunk low and to one side, like a sorrowing bird. Some days he did not eat his food, but she was too depressed to rally or scold him. There were times when she neglected to take her bath and sat on her crumpled bed with her gray hair hanging loose. At night she wandered around the house, and when she went up on the roof she found the old man lying on his side with his knees drawn up. She had no thought to spare for him; she came to look over the parapet not at the river or the sky, both shining and beautiful, but over the other side, at the terrace of the dance school. She saw the white mosquito nets standing in their unbroken rank. There was no movement, no sign of life, but she knew that under each net a figure lay stretched out, chastely asleep.

But one night there was movement. A net in the middle of the row of beds stirred; a leg was cautiously thrust out; then a man emerged. Although everything was floodlit by an almost full moon, she was too far away to make out whether it was one of the old teachers or a young one. It might even have been the stocky, pockmarked Kathak master who had replaced Ram. She watched him glide past the other beds—perhaps he was only going to the toilet? But the way he moved, like a thief, made him seem intent on a less innocent excursion. Once he stopped stock-still—maybe one of the sleepers had stirred—and stood there with one foot raised in the air. Then he continued, crouching low. She wanted to shout out a warning—was it to the others or to him, to let him know there was one who saw what he was up to? He reached the stairs leading down into the house and disappeared. She waited; if he had only gone to the toilet, he would return. She waited and he did not return.

She continued to stand by the parapet. Her eyes were still fixed on the row of white nets, but in her mind's eye she was following the progress of the one who had left: out of the house, down the lane, into the next lane; tonight he would have to be very careful, because of the moon. When he reached his destination, there would be someone to let him in. And then what? She let her imagination roam, beginning with what Ram had told her—the brocade sofa and the bottle of whiskey—until suddenly she was plunged into her own ocean of memories, and it was not the girl and Ram she saw but herself and the old man—Prakash. In their marital bedroom, with the door locked and the electric fan whirring furiously but unable to cool their hot bodies; his hand was over her mouth to muffle her laughter.

She left the parapet and went to him where he lay curled up on his side. When she touched his shoulder, he sat up immediately, as if he had not been asleep at all. She said, "Why didn't you eat your food today?" There was something in her voice that made him raise his drooping head. "If you don't look after yourself," she said, "what will happen to you? And to me?" She touched his face. "And when did you last shave?" She spoke severely but bent down to his cheek, brushing the gray stubble with her lips. He smiled, toothless, blissful. She sat on the ground by his rickety bed, leaning against it; they talked together and were silent together. Although it was very late when they parted, he was up at dawn, and she heard him singing again:

As bees pile honey upon honey
O Kama! Thus in my own person
O Kama! Let honey flow
Let lustre, brilliance flow, and
strength! ♦



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MOTHER TONGUES

Subduing the language of the colonizer.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

The spread of English throughout the world, via commerce and colonialism and now popular culture, has spawned any number of fluent outriggers capable of contributing to English literature. Some, like most Australians and Americans, write English with no thought of an alternative; others, like certain inhabitants of the Caribbean, Ireland, Anglophone Africa, and India, write it against a background of native tongues or patois that are abandoned or suppressed in the creative effort—an effort that to a degree enlists them in a foreign if not enemy camp, that of the colonizer. "The God of Small Things," by Arundhati Roy (Random House; $23), a work of highly conscious art, is conscious not least of its linguistic ambivalence. It takes place in India's southern state of Kerala, where the local language is Malayalam; phrases and whole sentences of Malayalam, sometimes translated and sometimes not, seep into the book's English, whose mannerisms—compound and coined words, fragmentary sentences, paragraphs a word or a phrase long, whimsical capitalization—underline the eccentricity of the language in relation to the tale's emotional center. Estha and Rahel, male and female dizygotic twins who serve as the central characters, remember how their great-aunt Navomi Ipe, incongruously called Baby Kochamma, inflicted English upon them, making them write "I will always speak in English" a hundred times and practice their pronunciation by singing, "Rej-Oice in the Lo-Ord Or-Orlways / And again I say rej-oice." The twins' sensibilities, uncannily conjoined, are expressed in a confidently unorthodox prose that owes something to Salman Rushdie's jazzy riffs:

> Their lives have a size and a shape now. Estha has his and Rahel hers.
>
> Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits have appeared like a team of trolls on their separate horizons. Short creatures with long shadows, patroling the Blurry End. Gentle half-moons have gathered under their eyes and they are as old as Ammu [their mother] was when she died. Thirty-one.
>
> Not old.
> Not young.
> But a viable die-able age.

The main events of the novel, to which everything harks back, occur in December of 1969, when the twins' English cousin, Sophie Mol, arrives for a two-week Christmas vacation. She is the daughter and only child of their uncle Chacko, who met his English wife at Oxford, and who, divorced, has returned to live with his mother, his aunt, and his sister, Ammu—herself divorced—in the big family house in Ayemenem. They are Syrian Christians; Baby Kochamma's father was the Reverend E. John Ipe, a priest personally blessed by the Patriarch of Antioch. His son, the twins' grandfather Pappachi, was an Imperial Entomologist under the British and after Independence assumed the title of Joint Director of Entomology. But a rare moth he discovered was not named after him, and this moth, with "its unusually dense dorsal tufts," consequently "tormented him and his children and his children's children." He beat his wife, Mammachi, with a brass flower vase every night until Chacko, burly from rowing for Oxford, put a halt to the practice; then Pappachi took his favorite mahogany rocking chair into the middle of the driveway and smashed it with a plumber's monkey wrench. His black rages were partly the fruit of spousal jealousy: Mammachi in her youth was a violinist of potential concert calibre, until he forbade further lessons; in her middle age, though virtually blind, she created from some of her recipes a successful business, named (by Chacko) Paradise Pickles and Preserves. The pickle plant with its employees, the great old house, the river beyond, a deserted house and rubber plantation on the other side of the river (once owned by the Black Sahib, a fabled Englishman who had "gone native" and committed suicide), the Ipe heritage of backward-looking Anglophilia, a sky-blue Plymouth that Pappachi spitefully bought for himself after his rebuke from Chacko—these are the data that Arundhati Roy revolves before us as she spins her circuitous tale. The twins were seven when nine-year-old Sophie Mol visited; now they are thirty-one, and Rahel has returned from America upon learning that Estha has been sent back to Ayemenem by his father and stepmother, who have wearied of his withdrawn and virtually demented behavior.

Roy takes her time exploring the past by means of the present. Her novel provides one more example of William Faulkner's powerful influence upon Third World writers; his method of torturing a story—mangling it, coming at it roundabout after portentous detours and delays—presumably strikes a chord in stratified, unevenly developed societies that feel a shame and defeat in their history. The narrator works as hard to avoid as to reach her destination of forbidden sex and atrocious violence. As we read "The God of Small Things," we know that Sophie Mol died during her Christmas vacation in India, but we don't know why. We know that Rahel and Estha were exposed to something dreadful, but we don't know what. Roy peels away the layers of her mysteries with such delicate cunning, such a dazzlingly adroit shuffle of accumulating revelations within the blighted House of Ipe, that to discuss the plot would violate it.

Treading Roy's maze, we learn a great deal about India—a "vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation." We learn foremost that in 1969 it was not a safe place. Though Kerala, unlike "a small country with similar landscape" to the east, is not being bombed by the forces of capitalism, it holds a large number of Communists, whose machinations threaten the solvency of Paradise Pickles and Preserves, and whose angry marches shatter the peace of an upper-class Syrian Christian family on its way, in its big blue Plymouth, to Cochin to see the movie "The Sound of Music." The young nation seethes with the violence

Arundhati Roy: A novelist who works as hard to avoid as to reach her destination of forbidden sex and atrocious violence. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

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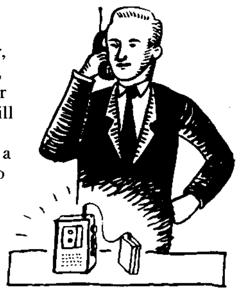

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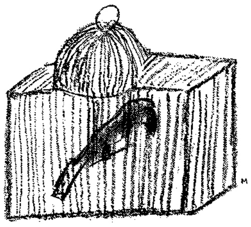
of its long history, its resentments, its prejudices, going back to a time "before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut." Husbands beat wives, women have no *locus standi*, and Ammu, divorced from her alcoholic Hindu husband, spends hours "on the riverbank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tangerine": "A liquid ache spread under her skin, and she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place." The liquid ache of longing is widespread, and dangerous. The Black Sahib committed suicide because "his young lover's parents had taken the boy away from him." Chacko still loves his pale English wife; fat old Baby Kochamma was once fanatically in love with a Catholic priest; and little Estha, banished to the empty lobby of Abhilash Talkies during "The Sound of Music," is coerced into masturbating the man behind the refreshment counter. This horrific scene, with its inordinately vivid molester ("He looked like an unfriendly jeweled bear. . . . His yellow teeth were magnets. They saw, they smiled, they sang, they smelled, they moved. They mesmerized"), is one of the novel's flashing lunges outside the suffocating circle of Anglophile Syrian Christians into the Indian masses, in their poverty and dynamic, Dickensian color.



Occidental readers who imagined that untouchability was banished by Mahatma Gandhi will find the caste onus cruelly operative in 1969, and not just in the memories of the aged:

> Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.

Velutha, a clever Paravan child who lives in Ayemenem, brings to Ammu, a child three years older, little toys he has made—"tiny windmills, rattles, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds"—and presents them "holding them out on his palm (as he had been taught to) so she wouldn't have to touch him to take them." This sad detail, of the child taught to give without being touched, has a comic counterpart later in the novel, when Velutha's father, the subservient Vellya Paapen, is knocked down by an angry push: "He was taken completely by surprise. Part of the taboo of being an Untouchable was expecting not to be touched." In a century scarred by racial genocides, in a country no stranger to formal and informal racial segregation, Hinduism's creation of a vast loathed underclass still has the power to shock, as if it held a magnifying glass to our own inner discriminations and dismissals.

Rahel, studying in Delhi to be an architect, meets and marries an American, who brings her to Boston. But, though adoring, he can't break through her preoccupation with the past; after her divorce, she works for several years as the night cashier in a bulletproof booth at a gas station outside Washington, where "drunks occasionally vomited into the till, and pimps propositioned her with more lucrative job offers." One of her recurrent visitors, a "punctual drunk with sober eyes," shouts, "Hey, you! Black bitch! Suck my dick!" This is not so far from Baby Kochamma's thinking of the twins as "Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry." Neither India nor the world is an easy melting pot.

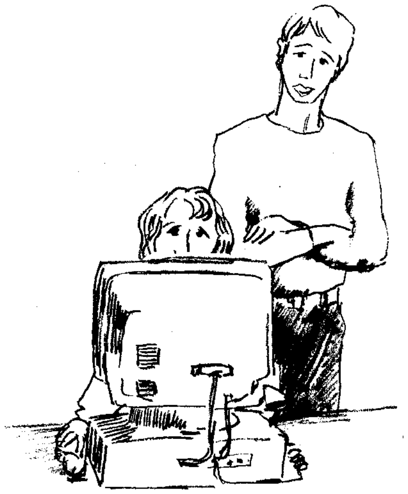
Roy manages to catch, in the skein of the Ipes' haunted history, a sense of India's deep past, the mingling of dark inhabitants and light invaders going back to the Aryan authors of the Vedas, the roots of Hinduism. She brings us, in her ecstatically written last pages, into the heart of human love and the mythic past: Krishna, as it were, couples with Radha on the riverbank, and, when the lover makes the beloved dance, it is the dance of Kali, of death and coming destruction. There is even a magic-realist touch: he folds his fear into a rose, and she wears it in her hair. Such dark bliss is akin to that sought by a group of male kathakali dancers who, unsatisfied and humiliated by the truncated performances they put on for the guests at a tourist hotel that by 1993 has arisen on the Black Sahib's old plantation, give the full performance, in an all but empty temple, until dawn.

Since “The God of Small Things” delivers so much terror and beauty, and so omniscient a view of modern India, it is perhaps ungrateful to complain of the novel’s artiness. But the prose, shuttling back and forth among its key images and phrases, rarely lets us forget that we are in the company of an artificer: Roy caresses her novel until it seems not merely well wrought but overwrought. Much of our mental energy is spent in recalling where insistently repeated phrases like “Locusts Stand I” and “Esthapappychachen Kuttappen Peter Mon” and “Sourmetal Smells” first occurred, and what they signify. A Joycean passage like

> A carbreeze blew. Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows. Still birds slid by on moving wires, like unclaimed baggage at the airport.
>
> A pale daymoon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went. As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man

arguably transports us into the mind of a seven-year-old, but arch modifiers like “dinner-plate-eyed” and “slipperoily” and palindromic formations such as “Dark of Heartness tiptoed into the Heart of Darkness” put us squarely on a writer’s desk. Well, a novel of real ambition must invent its own language, and this one does. Arundhati Roy, the elegant dust jacket tells us, has worked as a production designer and has written two screenplays; this experience shows in the skill with which she sets and lights her scenes, as well as in such touches of special jargon as “mosaic blur,” “gofers on a film set,” and “a test tube of sparkling, backlit urine.” Her scenes get replayed in both the reader’s memory and the characters’. This is a first novel, and it’s a Tiger Woodsian début—the author hits the long, socio-cosmic ball but is also exquisite in her short game. Like a devotionally built temple, “The God of Small Things” builds a massive interlocking structure of fine, intensely felt details. A rosary is held up to the light: “Each greedy bead grabbed its share of sun.”

“Beach Boy,” by Ardashir Vakil (Hamish Hamilton; £14.99), takes a first-person ramble through a few years in the life of Cyrus Readymoney, a Bombay boy who is eight when the narrative opens and ten when it concludes. He lives with his parents and four siblings in a modernist glass house facing the Arabian Sea, in the Juhu district, and when he is not in school spends his days on the beach, at the movies, or visiting the houses of his playmates, which cluster next to the compound of the divorced Maharani of Bharatnagar. In his room, Cyrus spies on the Maharani’s adopted daughter Meera and keeps a journal of amazing literacy, for a third grader. At school, and at tennis (his formidable mother is a player of near-Wimbledon calibre), he is a daydreaming underachiever; reality comes crashing in on him in the form of the reclusive Maharani’s friendship, a visit to the rural south with the Krishnan family, his parents’ separation, and his father’s heart attack. Though as casual-seeming in composition as “The God of Small Things” is ingenious and purposeful, “Beach Boy” shares with the more ambitious novel a number of features. Child protagonists are placed in the recent past—1969 is specified in one novel and 1972 in the other. Ardashir Vakil was born in Bombay in 1962 and lives in London, where he teaches English; he and Arundhati Roy give us an India remembered, a land, like Nabokov’s Russia, glistening with the dew of early impressions and ominous with the dimly seen, uncontrollable machinations of adults. Movies—Hindi extravaganzas in Cyrus’s case—are crucial events, described in detail. Parents in a state of sexual rebellion occur in both novels, and exude a sense of disappointed gentility, of decreasingly relevant foreign educations. Chacko Ipe went to Oxford, and Cyrus’s father, it turns out, went to Yale. The religious affiliations of both discontented, bourgeois households are out of the Hindu mainstream: the Ipes are Syrian Christians, and the Readymoneys—a name that Cyrus’s great-grandfather “earned for himself when he took on the trade of moneylender ninety years ago in the docks of Bombay”—are Parsis, Zoroastrians, who “pray at agiarys . . . where the same flame has been kept burning for hundreds of years,” and who feed their dead to vultures. These religions are scarcely more exotic to Western readers than to the children of these novels, who are in thrall to music, books, and magazines originating in the West. Both



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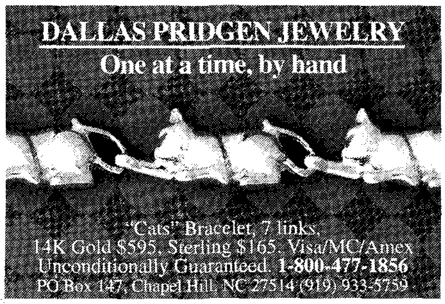

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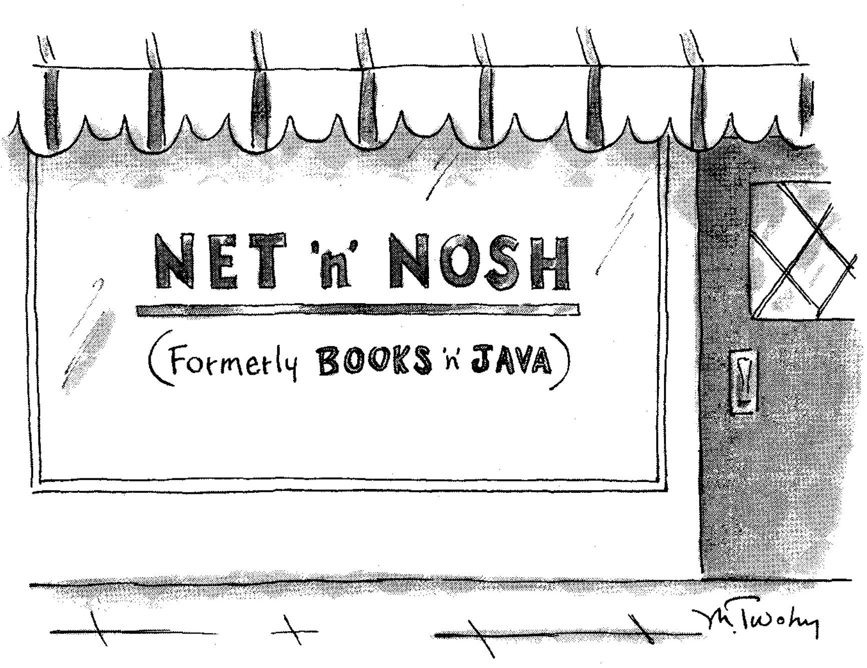

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novels, as it happens, contain a scene of the childish hero masturbating someone else—a comic and blithe scene in Vakil, a sinister one in Roy. A robust, puritanically Hindu Communist figures in both books, as does a minute, curiously Indian maternal gesture: Ammu, seeing her son off on a train, "scanned the finger-nails of the little hand she held, and slid a black sickle of dirt from under the thumb-nail," while Cyrus's mother, similarly preoccupied, "spooned out the dirt from under my nails with her thumbnail and flicked it away."

These novels come from the same India—the same Western-educated, mercantile social class, the same western coast—and similarly touch on the same kathakali dancers, ravenous kites, and colorful circumambient poverty. Cyrus, trying in his self-education to attain social awareness, rides through the Bombay slums:

> The pavement on the road into town had been colonized by makeshift homes—pavement dwellings cobbled together with recycled materials collected from rubbish heaps. Brown sheets of cloth, bits of metal, torn shreds of plastic, calendars, books and hundreds of other discarded artefacts that surfaced like flotsam from the ebb and flow of the city. . . . A group of pavement boys, one of them with a rain hat over his head, was crouched over a game of cards. They were arguing noisily. A man sat on his haunches smoking a beedi. A baby girl was being vigorously washed by her mother; her brown body, covered in lather, glistened in the darkness. A gaunt man in a vest emerged red-eyed from one of the entrances to a bamboo-pole and cloth hut.

Where a native sees life, a tourist sees poverty; Cyrus, young as he is, is beginning to see with foreign eyes, those of a boy who has read too much James Hadley Chase and too many "Archie" comic books. As his family shatters and he is moved from the glass house on Juhu Beach to a Bombay high-rise, he becomes somewhat opaque; the journal he was keeping is forgotten, and the novel, in its new terrain, feels impulsive, spotty, censored. Where Estha and Rahel had each other to turn to, Cyrus has no one. What he does have is food: "Beach Boy" comprises a long ode to boyish hunger, and to the rich variety of stuffs that hold it at bay. In the movie theatre:

> I could smell the fried samosas. The taste of salted popcorn made my mouth dry. I wanted anything and everything.

At the Krishnans':

> The lights in the kitchen were bright, and tempting smells of frying onion, ground coconut and coriander stole up my nostrils. . . . The thought of sitting there waiting for an uttapam I might never get filled my empty stomach with apprehension.

At his grandmother's:

> Scrambled eggs were her specialty. I learned from an early age that to make them smooth and creamy you had to have them on the lowest fire possible and constantly stir the egg and milk mixture. When the eggs were almost done, my

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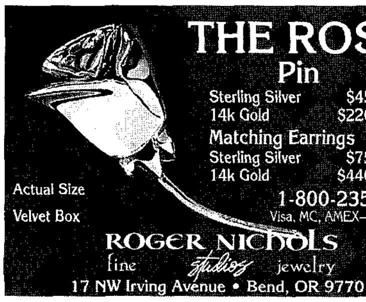

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grandmother would carefully shred half a cube of Amul cheese on top. I gobbled them up with sprinklings of black pepper.

Before a street vender, a *bhaiya:*

The bhaiya cuts a lime in half, he chops a green mango into tiny squares, he shreds some coriander leaves, he lifts up a box and slides out a sheaf of pages torn out from a magazine. The paper is thick and durable but not glossy—perfect for the food it will hold. He folds one sheet over and makes a wide cone-shaped vessel. Now comes the delicate throwing together of ingredients, dry and wet, that delights the heart.

In Kerala, picnicking:

We sat on the rocks, munching, lost in the lovely tastes of coriander, coconut and curry leaves, fresh curry leaves with waxy yellow potatoes, dotted with black mustard seeds. Smoky, spicy, nutty, scented potatoes. The taste of curry leaves made me appreciate the dark canopy of leaves above, the heat of the afternoon offset by the cool sweat brought on by the spices.

Back at Granny's:

She cooked delicious evening meals too: rus chawal, with its tender goat and coconut milk, khichri kheema; lentil-stained rice with healthy portions of clove and cinnamon-flavoured mince, machhi-no-sas, a thick white curry with tails of pomfret. There was a pudding every night: caramel custard, rice pudding, home-made ice-cream, falooda and an opaque pink ghas nu jelly.

And on to the Maharani's:

For pudding we ate Alphonso mangos. Ripe and golden from their straw beds. Nothing can quite compare with the sinking of teeth into the vivid orange flesh of an Alphonso. The scent of marmalade and candied fruit, and a taste like the sweet sharpness of limes are followed by the clean juice running into the mouth. "Food for the Gods" my father called them.

Is India trying to fill with delicacies the void in our young hero, whom a confusingly hybrid culture has left unconsoled and bewildered, or is the author, as he envisions tropical fruit in gray London, trying to fill himself? Arundhati Roy lives in New Delhi, as far from Cochin as Boston is from Miami. Is there a place, these novels make us wonder, for an English-language literature within India, where a bristling nationalism staves off Asian neighbors and a Hindu fundamentalism arises to compete with the Islamic variety? A writer is a spy in childhood and a self-interrogator as an adult. Who will read the debriefing report? These two writers certainly have a past—vivid, problematical, precious—but where is their future? ♦

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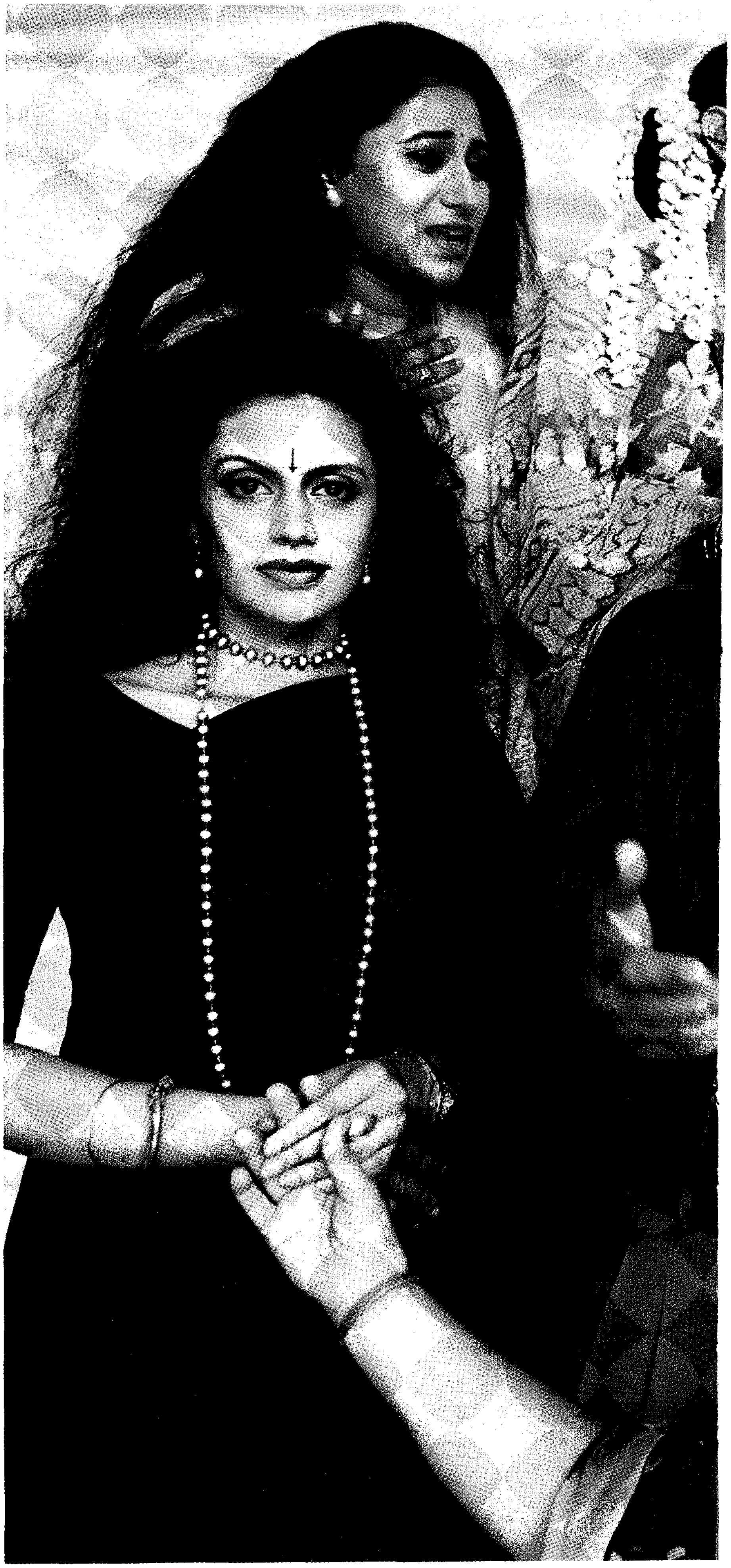
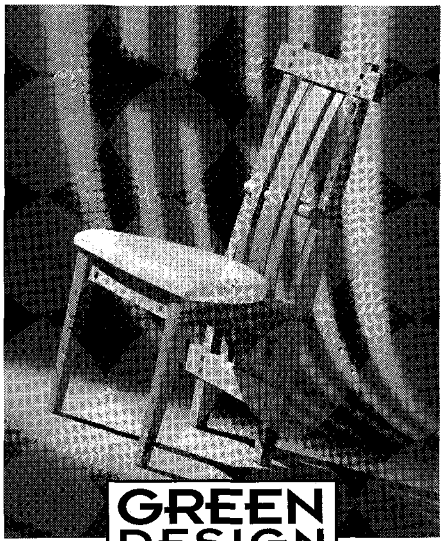
AS INDIA TURNS

THE enormous popularity of "Shanti"—a television soap opera that, dubbed into five languages, commands an audience of something like two hundred million people—is a topic of endless speculation among India watchers. What does it say, for instance, about "Shanti" 's network, the state-owned Doordarshan, once a monopoly delivering farm reports to a captive audience but now forced to compete with fifty or so other channels, some offering choice American fare? "Shanti" has enabled Doordarshan to trounce "Santa Barbara" and "The Bold and the Beautiful." Should India's left-wing government, top-heavy with officials weaned on socialism, be pleased or appalled? Will the "Shanti" audience interpret the recent addition to the cast of a villainous television baron as an implicit criticism of the privatization of India's airwaves? What are the consequences for oppressed Indian women of a program whose audience is largely female and whose heroine is bent on avenging the rape of her mother—a rape during which she herself was conceived?

In India's recent past, characters in hit films have been worshipped at household shrines built in their honor. The executives of Doordarshan wouldn't be displeased if the heroine of "Shanti" underwent a similar apotheosis. The network has long delivered its own brand of religious programming: in the eighties, it had a tremendous success with serializations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the sacred epic poems of Sanskrit. At showtime, the streets of Indian cities were visibly less crowded, and in the villages the few TV-owners were deluged with guests who would drape the sets with votive garlands as Hanuman carried a mountain to Rama or the Pandavas and the Kauravas fought it out on Kurukshetra's plain. Traditionalists were bewildered by Doordarshan's adaptations, which turned these sprawling scriptures into what were essentially soap operas. Now, in this era of reversals, Doordarshan is poised to turn a soap opera into a national epic. —VIJAY SESHADRI



The cast of "Shanti," May 18, 1997.



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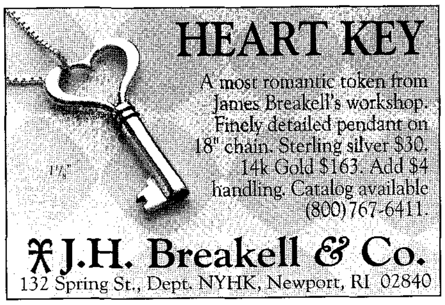

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE MISTRESS OF SPICES, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Anchor; $22.95). From her dim shop in pre-quake Oakland, Tilo, the alchemical heroine of this quirky fairy tale, sells cardamom and fenugreek—not just for pilafs and pulses but also for the bouts of loneliness and despair that plague her mostly Indian clientele. Divakaruni's prose is so pungent that it stains the page, yet beneath the sighs and smells of this brand of magic realism she deftly introduces her true theme: how an ability to accommodate desire enlivens not only the individual heart but a society cornered by change.

LEAVE IT TO ME, by Bharati Mukherjee (Knopf; $23). Devi Dee, like many of Mukherjee's heroines, is a postcolonial poster child with an identity crisis. Born in India to an American hippie mother and a Chinese gangster father and then abandoned in an Indian orphanage, she is adopted by an Italian-American family and named Debby DiMartino; twenty-three years later, she graduates from SUNY Albany and sets off on a cross-country road trip to find her Bio-Mom. By the time she arrives in San Francisco—having rechristened herself Devi Dee—and joins up with a group of aging ex-hippies and a psychotic Vietnam vet, it is clear that this kaleidoscopic coming-of-age story is governed not by growing self-awareness but by destiny and karma.

LOVE AND LONGING IN BOMBAY, by Vikram Chandra (Little, Brown; $22.95). In Chandra's stories the door to the past is never shut. When a young man in a waterfront bar declares that India must shed its ghosts and superstitions if it is to move into the future, an old man answers him with five tales of loss and reckoning. In one, a soldier forced to amputate his own leg begins to hear voices; in another, an entrepreneur who appears to have been killed for his Rolex turns out to be the victim of a more intimate betrayal. Even the young man's frenetic Bombay of computer software and overpriced beer is haunted by the memories of its inhabitants.

ANITA AND ME, by Meera Syal (New Press; $23). In the English mining village of Tollington, where nine-year-old Meena Kumar lives with her immigrant parents, the swaggering, back-talking, candy-snatching Anita Rutter is "cock of the yard." Meena, on the other hand, longs for fish-and-chips, a perfect Midland accent, and a stronger sense of belonging. While her doting mother dresses her in frills that make her look like "a bad tempered doily" and her father frets over her increasingly outlandish lies (that she is a Punjabi princess, that she owns an elephant), Meena schemes to exchange the boisterous, cheek-pinching attentions of her Indian elders for the more rigorous demands of the older girl's friendship. After all, if Anita can't teach Meena how to be a proper English hooligan, no one can.

IN LIGHT OF INDIA, by Octavio Paz; translated from the Spanish by Eliot Weinberger (Harcourt Brace; $22). These highly personal and erudite meditations represent Paz's long look back at India, where he served first as an attaché at the Mexican Embassy in New Delhi, and later as Mexico's Ambassador. His knowledge of the subcontinent's history is vast, and he displays excellent discrimination in choosing his themes from the welter that India offers. Not the least of this book's many satisfactions comes from watching a fecund, intellectually powerful sensibility engaged with a subject capacious enough to justify its attentions.

TROPICAL CLASSICAL, by Pico Iyer (Knopf; $25). As our deputy in far-flung climes like Kathmandu and Ethiopia, Pico Iyer can hardly be surpassed: his métier is journalistic generosity. Through him, the reader has relatives in Bombay, an intimate's knowledge of Nepal, and the chance to drink tea with Norman Lewis. This book is an assortment of short pieces that Iyer wrote during the past two decades. You can open it at random, as you would an atlas, and turn up something fascinating.

AFTER EMPIRE: SCOTT, NAIPAUL, RUSHDIE, by Michael Gorra (Chicago; $35). If "postcolonial studies" has been lambasted for its obscurantism, Gorra shows that complexity needn't come at the expense of clarity. The three novelists he writes about form a curious ménage, yet together they help him demonstrate how imperialism has shaped the consciousness of the colonizer as profoundly as that of the colonized. India, Paul Scott once wrote, is where the British came to "the end of themselves as they were." Gorra suggests that it's also where they can start to reckon with themselves as they will be.

SNAKES AND LADDERS, by Gita Mehta (Talese/Doubleday; $22.95). This is a graduation speech of a book—optimistic, proud, even coy. Mehta's subject is modern India, and her genre is the tantalizing glimpse. She draws on her own memories of growing up in India, and she moves nimbly—with the freedom that only glimpses allow—from the corridors of power to the domain of ragpickers on the outskirts of Delhi.

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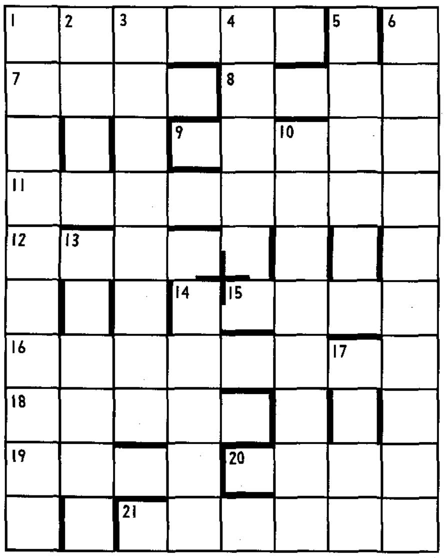

ACROSS

- 1 Put down prosecutor's animals (6)
- 7 Patriots displaying rebellion (4)
- 8 Finish off skimpy cheese selection (4)
- 9 Nary a soul empty after lunchtime (2,3)
- 11 Horse in South Dakota covered with spangles (8)
- 12 Shoot wolf from behind (4)
- 15 You sometimes have to tie it up and beat it soundly? (4)
- 16 Callous hustler's maneuvers (8)
- 18 Suggestions tossed aside (5)
- 19 Rent drop (4)
- 20 Intent woman acquires ring (4)
- 21 Rocky's decline in work (6)

DOWN

- 1 Property is converted into wealth (10)
- 2 Maiden trimmed on both sides with right hand (4)
- 3 Mark has given up, almost (3,5)
- 4 Simmering a bit of bear grease (5)
- 5 Restaurant patron with zero cash (6)
- 6 Teases Stallone for no reason (10)
- 10 Order John to be at work (2,3,3)
- 13 "The Incredible Hulk" 's Ferrigno turned red—it's more flashy (6)
- 14 Cut "Moonstruck" actress in audition (5)
- 17 Barking animal shut up (4)

• •

This week's puzzle is by Patrick Berry. The solution to the last puzzle appears in this issue's R.S.V.P. section. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

ROAD RULES

BY MARK SINGER

Approximately fifty per cent of New York City cabdrivers are immigrants from the Asian subcontinent.—*Statistic provided by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission.*

ATTENTION! Drivers! This is the dispatcher! The Taxi and Limousine Commission has decided to revise its licensing rules. To get and keep a hack license, no longer will it suffice to know merely that the Bronx is up and the Battery down—but fear not! Aware that half of you cultivated your remarkable talents in your native India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the T.L.C. has very generously devised a special test. The questions are tailor-made for you who carry forth the wisdom and survival instincts that have withstood centuries of unwelcome intrusions from Scythians and Parthians, Mughals and Afghans—not to mention plague, war, natural disaster, and extremely long waits in line to pick up passengers at La Guardia Airport. Examples below are for your eyes only!

1. You are going from Houston Street and Avenue B in Manhattan to Hillside Avenue and 187th Street in Queens. Which of the following is the more innovative route?

(a) Head north, head east, cross water, go some more.

(b) Hydrofoil to J.F.K., non-stop to Frankfurt, change for Bombay, Bombay to L.A., red-eye to J.F.K., Q3 bus.

2. On a trip to Newark Airport, what information must the driver disclose to the passenger?

(a) In case of sudden acceleration or lane changes, feel free to grip vinyl piping on upholstery.

(b) Amount of surcharge for voyage across Pulaski Skyway, one of the Eight Wonders of New Jersey.

(c) Entire life story.

3. What information must the driver *never* disclose?

(a) Shortcut to dharma.

(b) Translation of dispatcher's Urdu jokes making sport of Park Avenue Brahmins.

(c) How to get to Carnegie Hall.

4. If the driver forgets the destination, should he ask the passenger to repeat it?

(a) No, because eliminates from ride element of suspense.

(b) No, because interferes with passenger's enjoyment of scenery in small upstate villages.

(c) Not necessary, because, in time, the one true path will reveal itself.

5. A passenger says, "What are you, insane? Let me out right now!" He actually means:

(a) "I am having a great time but I just realized I left my wallet at home."

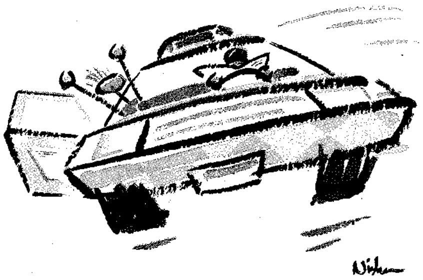
(b) "As enlightening as this has been, I now wish to experience the splendors of the F train."

(c) "You are clearly the most distinguished graduate of the Taxi Academy. I feel unworthy to be your passenger."

6. If a T.L.C. inspector offers to approve your taxi in return for money, what should you do?

(a) Sorry, forgot to start meter; please repeat question.

(b) Say, "Oh, no, not me. You are joking," then "Ha ha," then wait for inspector to make next move.



(c) Express outrage, shock. Slip inspector fifty bucks.

7. Please reply "True" or "False" to the following statements:

(a) Driver cannot refuse a rush-hour fare to Brooklyn when passenger displays firearm.

(b) Wrong way from Chrysler Building to Staten Island is via Tallahatchie Bridge.

(c) Driver must not sell anything in his taxi or advertise any merchandise or service—unless it is of the highest highest best finest quality.

8. An irritable passenger feels that you have overcharged him. He demands to know your name and license number. What should you do?

(a) Tell passenger politely you do not have that information.

(b) Tell him you are inaugurating Frequent Rider Rebate Program, offer charter membership.

(c) Tell him you hold a mathematics degree from Bangalore University; demand to see his credentials.

9. If your car starts to skid, fishtailing to the right, you should:

(a) Turn front wheels to right, shouting "Wheee!"

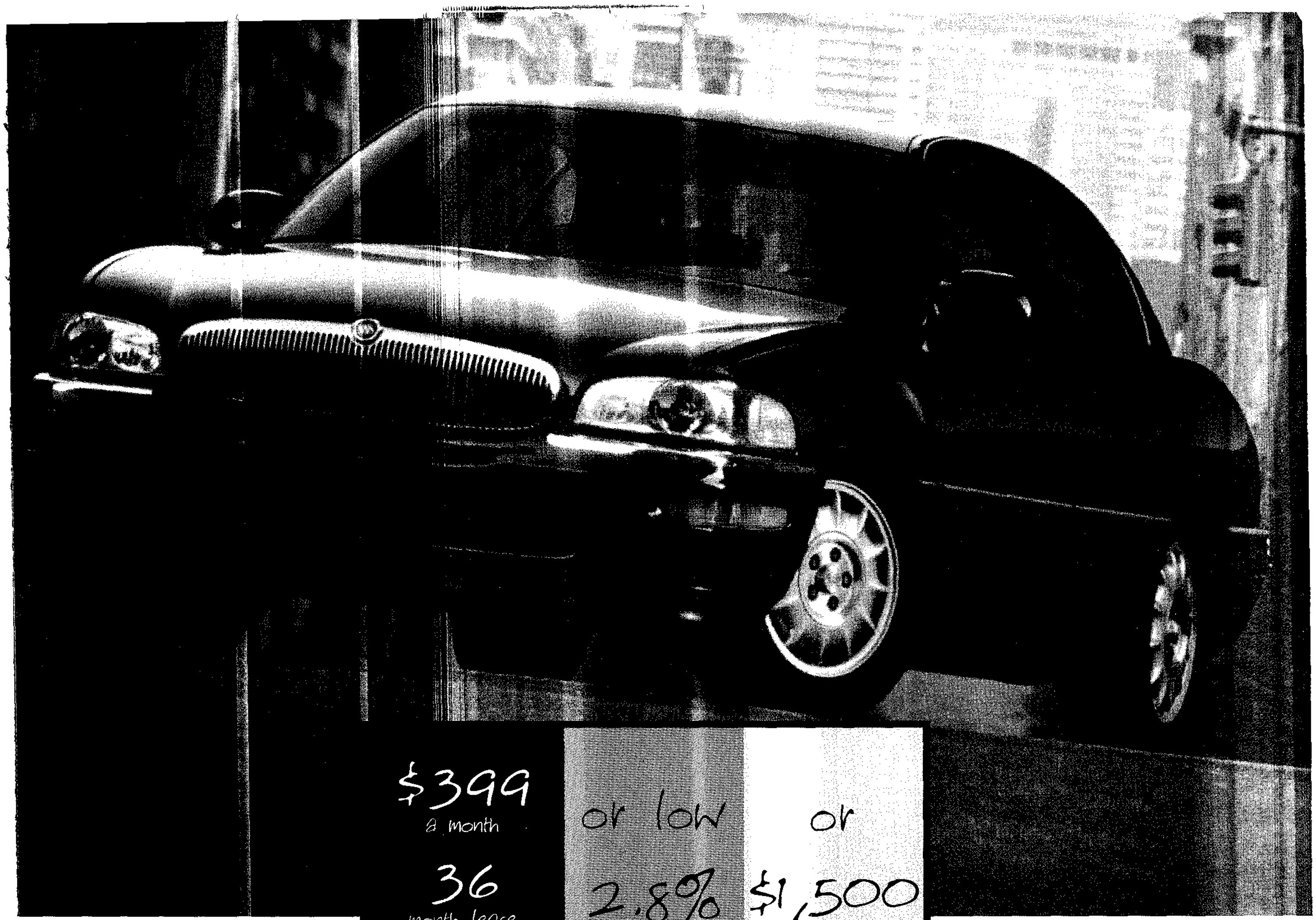
(b) Turn front wheels to left, shouting "Vishnu! Siva! Brahma! Here I come!"

10. All the following statements are correct except:

(a) Gratuity is always optional, always appreciated.

(b) Passenger's request for uninterrupted sense of harmony and oneness with universe must be respected during tire change on Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

(c) Earthly life is hard, then you make an abrupt U-turn. ♦



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